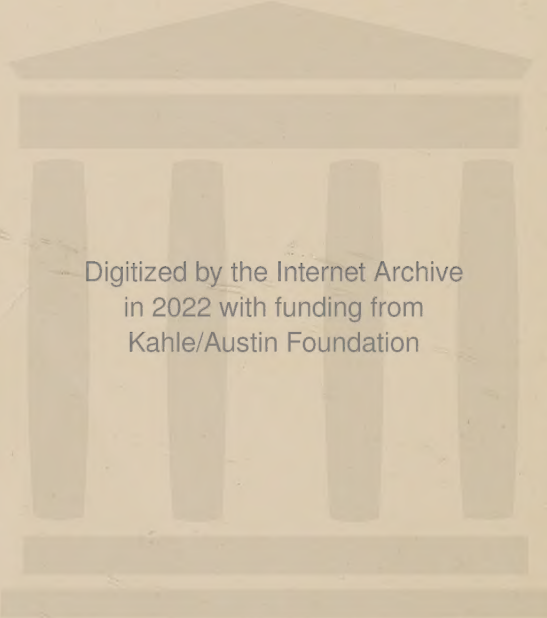




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To

Edward

from

Uncle Yarten.

Christmas 1908.



# A Christmas Wreath

SELECTED

Issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio  
and Other States



COLUMBUS, OHIO  
PRESS OF LUTHERAN BOOK CONCERN  
1899

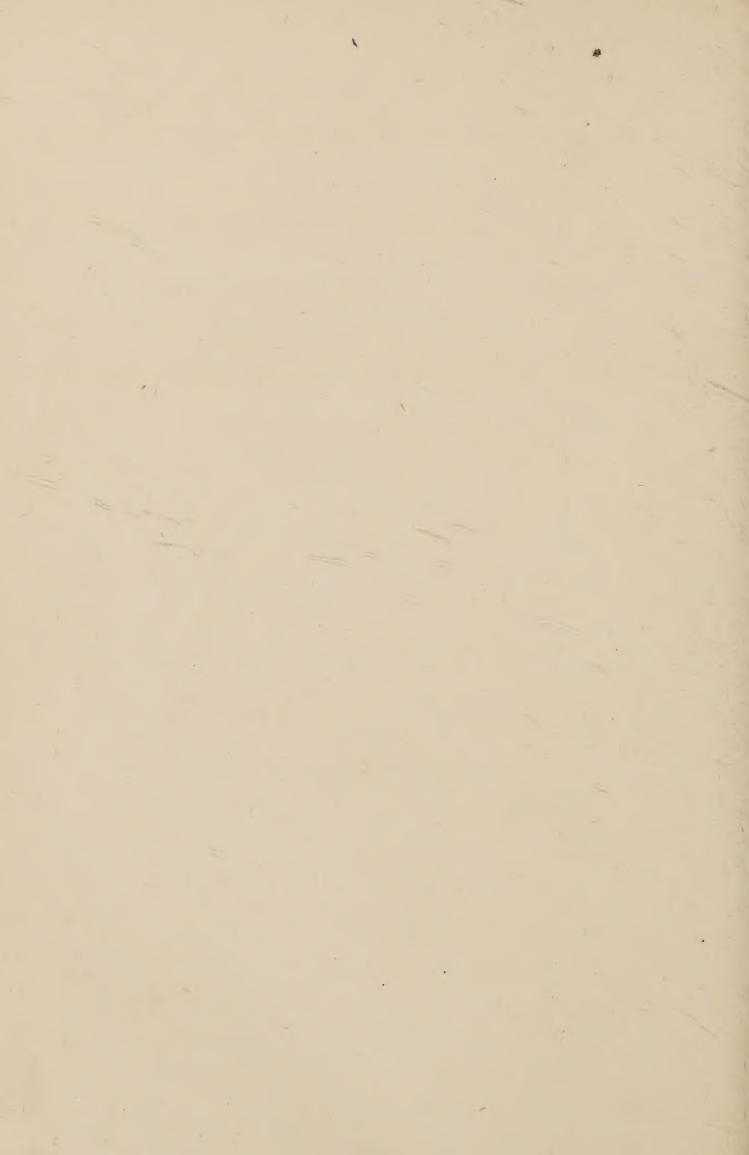




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## AN OLD CHRISTMAS CAROL.



### I.

A merry Christmas, children dear,  
I send, with wishes kind,  
A simple Christmas carol too,  
To suit the infant mind.

### II.

Your little brains are busy now,  
Your eyes are opened wide,  
To see the good St. Nicholas  
Out of the chimney glide,  
Laden with toys, and story-books,  
With candy, cakes and pies.  
For Santa Claus is sure to come  
With full and rich supplies.

### III.

A roguish little fellow, he!  
So saith our ancient song;  
Sly as a fox, and full of glee,  
And broad as he is long.  
And closely wrapped, so nice and warm,  
In fur from top to toes,  
And in his hand a string of bells  
That jingle as he goes.

## IV.

But you will never see him, though  
You're sitting up to see;  
For he is quick as lightning's flash,  
A roguish fellow, he!  
Then children should be very good,  
And go to bed betimes;  
And say their pray'rs as they are taught,  
Before the Christmas chimes.

## V.

Mind well to hang the stockings up!  
And when you're fast asleep  
The Christmas toys and Christmas joys  
Will o'er your slumbers creep.  
And on the merry Christmas morn  
How early you will run,  
And take out from their hiding-place  
The presents, one by one!  
Your eyes will sparkle then with joy,  
And with a hearty cheer  
Make haste to welcome all your friends  
As soon as they appear.

## VI.

A merry Christmas, father dear,  
And dearest mother, too,  
And one for good old Santa Claus—  
For him, what can I do?  
Who is St. Nicholas, mama,  
And pray, who sends him here,  
To make our little hearts rejoice  
Before each glad New Year?

St. Nicholas, my little ones,  
Means but this simple thing—  
The kindly offerings of love  
We to each other bring.  
And ancient legends tells us this:  
That in the olden times  
The day began with songs of praise  
And merry Christmas chimes.  
Then rich men opened wide their doors,  
And poor men feasted well;  
For all was plenty, peace and joy,  
On that high festival,  
And parents taught their infant flocks  
In holy church to pray,  
And eventide, with harmless sports,  
Closed in their Christmas-day.

## VII.

Doubt not that on such harmless mirth  
The glorious God hath smiled,  
For Christmas owes its origin  
E'en to a little child.  
Of humble parentage and birth,  
And in a manger laid,  
He often had not while on earth,  
A place to lay His head.

## VIII.

Yet angels o'er His lowly couch  
Chanted their song of praise;  
The brightest star in heaven shed  
On Him its gentle rays.

Shepherds who watched their flocks by night,  
Though trembling and afraid,  
Followed that strange, mysterious light,  
And found where Christ was laid.

## IX.

And wise men too, of high renown,  
Paid Him their homage low,  
By faith they saw the kingly crown  
Upon His infant brow.  
With costly gifts and joyful songs  
All worshiped where He lay.  
And thus began in ancient time  
Our sacred Christmas-day.

## X.

Ye know this Child of humble birth,  
This babe of Bethlehem,  
He is the Lord of Heaven and Earth,  
With regal diadem!  
Descending from His throne in heaven,  
His mansions in the sky,  
He came, with all-redeeming love,  
For sinful man to die.

## XI.

Ye know, by wicked hand was He,  
The Lord of Glory, slain;  
Ye also know, on God's right hand  
He doth forever reign.  
His was a pure and spotless life,  
And marked by precepts mild;

Ever amid the world's dark strife,  
The pure, the undefiled.  
Young children to His arms were brought  
(And they were not afraid),  
Kindly He said: "Forbid them not!  
Of such My kingdom's made."

## XII.

Then children dear, remember this:  
Mingle with all your mirth  
Praise to the Babe of Bethlehem,  
The Lord of Heaven and Earth.  
Thus may your little hearts always  
In innocence rejoice;  
God frowns not on your harmless play,  
Nor checks your gladsome voice.

## XIII.

I've sung my Christmas carol through;  
It is a simple lay,  
Suited to none but infant minds,  
On merry Christmas-day.

## HANSEI'S CHRISTMAS.



"Hark! the angels singing,  
Wake the happy morn,  
Joyful tidings bringing,  
Christ, the Lord, is born.

"In a lowly manger,  
(This shall be the sign),  
See the new-born stranger,  
Hail the Babe divine."

**F**AR away in Germany, near high moutains where the snow lay white and cool, even in the warm summer, whilst roses and violets were blooming in the valleys beneath, stood a little hovel, a very poor hovel indeed. It was built of rough logs, covered with an old roof, on which the moss had grown thick and green; but now no moss could be seen, for the roof was fast being covered with a downy sheet of snow, and the air was thick with soft, white flakes, looking indeed, as the little children said, "as if the fairies were plucking the feathers off their geese far up in the sky."

In the hut lay a little boy, not more than six years old. Very small and delicate looking was Hansei, for he had often suffered from cold and hunger, and would have been glad many a time to pick up the dry crusts that some children throw away without a thought. Poor, wee Hansei was hungry now, and only lay in his bed to keep warm, for there was no fire in the room. His mother and father had been away



from home all day, and he had eaten many hours before the single slice of black bread which they had left him. He wondered why they were so long coming home; they surely must have gathered up as much dry wood as they could carry by this time. They might even be lost in the dark woods, where the hungry wolves would certainly eat them up; and poor Hansei was so frightened and hungry, too, that he began to cry bitterly.

All this time the snow fell thick and fast around the hut, and the wind howled like a wild animal outside the door, until Hansei began to think that it might be the wolf that had eaten his father and mother, and was coming to eat him up too, which made the poor child cry louder and louder. Yet, dear children, this was Christmas Eve, the time when most little people whom I know are glad and happy with toys and bonbons and tall trees, full of brilliantly colored balls and lighted candles. Hansei knew that it was Christmas Eve, but to him it brought only one such picture, as he lay on his little bed so cold and hungry. It was of Christmas Eve a year before, when he was taken to a large house in the town to see a tree gay and beautiful with candles and balls, with green moss spread under it, on which were placed some figures, such as the Germans always have to help the little children remember that this night celebrates that on which the Christ-child was born into this world of sin and sorrow. Hansei thought of the figure of the Virgin mother, with the infant Saviour in her arms, and of how the children had gathered around the lighted

tree and sung about the wonderful circumstances that attended the birth of the divine child.

It was a beautiful time to remember, and Hansei smiled through his tears as he thought of it all, and of how Frau Werther had told them many lovely stories about the Christ-child, and given them each a fine cake with frosting on it and an apple and a motherly kiss before sending them home, telling them all to hang up their stockings ready for Kriss Kringle. Hansei had no stockings to hang up, and if he had, he knew that he would have gotten nothing in it but a dry crust of bread or a wooden horse, that his father carved out of the forest trees and sold in the neighboring village.

Suddenly Hansei stopped crying and listened, for he heard a strange sound above his head, like the rustling of the trees in summer, and he felt, or thought that he felt, a soft, warm breath on his cheek. He looked up, and saw hovering over him a beautiful creature with white wings and a face that smiled upon him even more gently than his own mother when she took him in her arms and strove to make him forget that he was hungry and cold. Hansei looked at the beautiful creature, for the room had become bright as day, until his tears stopped flowing, and he smiled; for no one could look long at that sweet face without feeling good and happy. Then a voice like music said:

"Hansei, art thou hungry?"

"Ah!" sighed the little boy, "I was hungry; but I don't mind it so much now."

"See then what I have brought thee;" and the angel bent over the little bed, and spread

out a dainty feast which made Hansei's hungry eyes dance with joy. There were round, rosy apples and beautiful cakes with white frosting on the top, and many other good things, the like of which Hansei had never seen before. A bright light seemed to come from the corner of the room. Hansei looked up, and what should he see there but a large fir tree, full of lighted candles of every color, and shining all over with gay balls, stars, toys, and bonbons. He fairly screamed with joy, and turning to the angel, who smiled at his delight, said:

"Beautiful one, didst thou bring me these things?"

"They were sent thee by the Christ-child," said the angel, stooping so low that her soft wings brushed Hansei's cheeks, now no longer pale and thin, but round and rosy, like the cheeks of his healthy little companions.

"Tell me all about Him," said Hansei. "Has He, then, so many good things, is He the same one that I say my prayers to every night?"

"The very same," said the angel. "He has heard thy prayers and answered them by sending thee all these things."

"How good!" cried Hansei, remembering how hungry he was, and eagerly devouring a cake. "Is the Christ-child as big as Hansei, or is He little, like my cousin Paul?"

"The dear Christ was once as little as thy cousin Paul," said the angel, gently, "and when He came down from heaven He had no bed to lie on; even like thine Hansei; but His mother had to make a cradle for Him in a stable, and lay him to rest in a rude trough where oxen

are fed. Think, Hansei, He came down from His beautiful bright home in heaven, to live in this cold world for your sake."

"That was good," said Hansei, smiling. "Tell me more."

"Whilst the little child lay in the stable, with His gentle, kind mother watching over Him, wise men came from a far off country to worship Him. God led them by a star up in heaven, which moved on and on until it came and stood over the stable. Then they knew that they had come to the right place, and they went in and knelt down before the Christ-child, for they felt that He was the Son of God. They spread out spices and costly things before the infant Saviour, while His mother wondered that these rich men should come so far to see her little son. On the hillside near Bethlehem the shepherds were watching their sheep and little white lambs, when suddenly a bright light shone above them, and an angel, with wings like mine, Hansei, came down from the starry sky, and told the frightened shepherds that Christ the Lord was born, and lay a tiny babe in a stable in this little town of Bethlehem. Scarce had he ceased speaking, when a host of shining ones joined him singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."

While the angel spoke it seemed to Hansei that the room was full of white-winged angels, who lent their voices to the song until the whole place rang with sweetest music. Hansei sang, too, and reached out his hands to touch the shining creatures, when they flew away as quickly as they had come, and he heard his own moth-

er's voice saying: "Art thou trying to catch the snowflakes, my son? They have come in through the holes in the roof, and are covering thee up in thy bed."

"Nay, mother," said Hansei, opening his sleepy blue eyes, "I wanted to touch the beautiful angel wings. And see what good things the Christ-child has sent me."

Poor Hansei looked in the corner for the dazzling tree; but saw nothing but a broken chair, which had been there all day; and on his bed, for the tempting feast which the angels had spread for him; but alas, it was not to be seen! He rubbed his sleepy eyes and wondered, but did not cry like some children; he only looked up into his mother's kind face, and said sadly: "The beautiful ones came to me from the Christ-child, and brought me good things, and such pretty toys; but now they are all gone, and Hansei is hungry again."

"They have taken them to some other child, Hansei," said the mother. "Art thou not willing to let the other child have some, too?"

"That is it!" cried Hansei, "clapping his hands, and never thinking that it was all a dream. 'I wish thou couldst have seen them, though, with wings as white as snow, and such sweet voices. They sang to me; the room was full of them, and they sang 'Glory to God in the highest.'"

"It is the Christmas hymn, and this is Christmas Eve, my Hansei; I had forgotten it until we came to the village, and saw the lights and toys. Do you know what happened on Christmas Eve?"

"Yes, mother, for the Christ-child sent the angel to tell me. He came down from the sky, a tiny baby, on Christmas Eve, and was put to sleep in a stable, while I have a bed; that is what the angel said."

"Do you then love the Christ-child?" asked his mother, thinking what a poor bed it was, and what a thankful heart her little son had.

"Yes, for He came to make us good, and He sent me so many nice things, and a fine tree full of candles, and the good angel to talk to me, who said that the Christ-child was once as small as my cousin Paul. He came down from heaven to make us happy. I wish I could see Him!"

Then Hansei's mother felt the tears coming into her eyes, for her boy looked so thin and pale that she often felt afraid that he would never live to be a man. But she dried them away and tried to smile, as she drew from her pocket a large red apple, saying: "See Hansei, what the good Frau Werther has sent thee, and this," drawing out a cake.

"Ah!" cried Hansei, clapping his hands, "the Christ-child has sent the angel back to thee with these; the poor child did not need them all."

His mother smiled, but did not tell him again that the Frau Werther had sent the good things to him, feeling herself that the Christ-child, whom Hansei loved, had put it into the good woman's heart to remember her boy.

When Hansei's father came in with a sled which he had made for his son (for he was a wood carver), and a piece of meat for their Christmas dinner, Hansei screamed aloud for

joy, and felt that there had never been a boy so rich or so happy as he. It did not take much to make Hansei happy, because he had such a thankful little heart; and although the beautiful tree was no longer in the corner, he felt that the Christ-child had sent him so many good things, that he sighed for it no more; but he often spoke of the angel's visit, and would not believe that it was all a dream.

What do you think, little children? Was it a dream, or not? And if it was, who sent such a happy dream?

## SEARCHING FOR CHRISTMAS.



ERSKINE M. HAMILTON.

THERE was a bright sunlight that morning, but it was cold—oh! so cold!—so Billy thought as he moved listlessly along the city's street. The worn old jacket, the ragged cap, the tattered boots from which small bare toes peeped, would not keep out the cold on that winter's morn, and Billy shuffled onward, shivering and holding the huge rag-bag close to his back to secure at least that slight protection from the piercing wind. For poor Billy was a rag-picker. Every morning, almost as far back as his child mind could remember, old Moll had sent him out from the miserable place she called home to gather rags. Along the gutters, in back alleys, from ash-barrels and in out-of-the-way places he would pick up bits of paper and cloth, and when evening came would return with his heavy load to meet, oftentimes, only abuse and blows from the wretched woman who had him in charge.

But on this morning a new strange longing had crept into Billy's heart. It was the day before Christmas. The shop windows were glittering and shining with all manner of beautiful things, and the streets filled with merry, laughing people. Richly dressed children—boys with rosy cheeks and nice warm jackets and overcoats, girls with sparkling eyes, tippets and furs—went dancing by, and he—Billy looked



down at his own thin fluttering garments. Why did these have all the nice things, and he only rags? He turned a corner to escape the jostle of some gentlemen who wondered "where the police were to allow such a scarecrow on the streets," and paused before a bill-board on which was a large poster announcing some Christmas doings. Billy looked at a highly colored picture in the center of the poster for a moment, and then began, slowly and with great difficulty, to spell out the large letters at the top.

"'C-h-r-i-s-t-m-a-s at H-o-m-e. Christmas at home,'" he said. "Wonder what Christmas is, anyhow? Wish I had one. But then I hain't no home to put one if I had it—except—Moll's"—Billy hesitated despondingly—"an that ain't no kind of a place. Wish I had a home."

Then came to him a dim, far-away vision of a time when he had a home, before he came to live with old Moll. It was but a very faint vision, hard to recall perfectly, but there was a memory of a large farm-house with bright fires, good food, and a warm, soft bed to sleep in; of a happy gathering of friends on some festive occasions, and of giving presents; of a pleasant-faced old gentleman whom he used to call "Grandpa," and a sweet, beautiful lady who was his mother; and then—then came a blank. Billy remembered that he was afterward in a city, that in a small, mean room he saw his mother, thin and pale, lying on a low bed in the corner; that she called him to her, and told him she was going away to leave him, and he must be a good boy; and after that he saw her no

more. Then came Moll. How Moll got him, or he got Moll, he didn't know; but certainly his was a hard lot thereafter.

"Wish I could find that house where I used to be," he murmured, leaning back against the bill-board and throwing the rag-bag to his feet. "Guess they'd have a real nice Christmas there, an' I do want to see one. I'd know the place, too, if I seen it. Wonder if I could find it if I went on ever so far? But then — Moll." A great fear crept into his heart at the last thought, but it was only momentary. "Pshaw! who's afraid of Moll! she'll beat me black an' blue anyhow, an' I won't never go near her again," he added, with sudden energy. "I'll just go right now."

Inspired by his new resolve, Billy caught up his bag and walked hurriedly out the long street toward the suburbs. In what direction he should go he had no definite idea; he only had a vague thought that it was somewhere out of the city. He would have liked to make some inquiries, but who or what to ask for he didn't know. Finally a brilliant thought came to him.

"I'll just ask for Christmas. I'm most sure they've got one there, an' mebbe I'll find the place that way."

He watched the faces of passers-by for some time, to find one whose looks would give indication for a kind answer to his questions, but saw none that suited until he came to where the houses were scattered and wide apart. Then he met a group of boys coming from an opposite direction.

"Hello! rag bag! where are you going with

that boy?" called one, rudely, giving the bag a push that nearly threw poor Billy off his feet.

"Please, don't; I'm looking for Christmas," said Billy, trying to keep out of their reach.

"Lookin' for Christmas, are ye? Why, ye look like old Santa Claus himself, as had jist climbed out of a chimbley. Say, what yer got in that ere bag — presents for the risin' generation?"

Billy saw he could get no information from them, and he had just made up his mind to run away, when another boy stepped forward, and spoke with great seriousness:

"Say, young one, ye wants to find Christmas, does yer?"

"Yes," answered Billy, timidly.

"Well, you jist keep right on, 'bout five miles into the country, an' yer'll find him. He's a rich old cove, he is, an' he'll take right to ye, an' 'dopt ye as his heir. He wants somebody to 'herit his property, awful. He told me, only yesterday, to send him a likely young one, an' you're just the chap."

Billy thanked him, and went on his way, while the boys passed on toward the city, jostling and pushing each other as they went.

"Don't believe those boys know much about it," said Billy, reflectively, as he trudged forward; "but then they said 'twas five miles in the country, an' 'twas an old man lived there. Mebbe it's grandpa," he added, brightening. "Guess I'll go there, anyhow."

And so the little feet moved briskly on, over the crisp, crackling snow, away out, leaving the smoke and noise of the city behind, out into the

clear, bracing country air, where snow-covered fields stretched far away, and great shadowy trees bowed low under their winter clothing; through dim, dark woods, and over silent ice-bound streams. It was a long walk, and Billy grew tired, cold and hungry. He had, fortunately, emptied the bag of the few rags he had gathered in the early morning, and had kept the sack to wrap around him. As yet he had found no house that looked like the one he remembered, but he still wandered on hopefully, but not as briskly as at first, until the sun stood high in the heavens and began to pass to the westward.

"Guess I'd like to stop somewhere, and get rested, and warm, and something to eat — mebbe — if they'll give it to me," he murmured softly to himself.

He was in a narrow strip of wood as he spoke, and presently the road led him out to more open country, and near to a small log-house by the wayside. Billy looked at it earnestly for a moment, and then walked up and knocked timidly at the door. A rough-featured Irish woman answered his call.

"Please, may I come in an' get warm?" he asked, faintly, a cold shiver running through his small body.

The woman eyed him cautiously from the half-open door, and then a kindly, pitying look came over her face, and she threw the door wide open.

"Come in! Indade ye may, an' wilcome. A little sack o' bones like ye's has no business out on a cold day as this. Come right in."

Billy gladly availed himself of the invitation, and was soon seated in front of the large blazing fire.

"It's nice to be in here — real nice," he said with a pleased look, stretching out his hands to the grateful warmth.

"Indade it's no wonder," said the woman; "an ye're hungry, too, I'll wager. Here, Patsy, Biddy, Mike"—to a group of robust, red-faced children near-by, — "away wid yerselves imma-jitly from that table, till I give this bye a bowl o' hot bread and milk. From the looks o' him I'm thinkin' he'd been dead a wake ago if he hadn't 'a' come here to-day; the poor gossoon!"

The warm bread and milk proved wonderfully refreshing, and Billy grew quite cheerful again. After he had eaten he sat down by the fire once more, until he was thoroughly warm and rested.

"I guess I must be going now," he said, at length, picking up his ragged cap and the old sack.

"An' where be ye's goin'?" asked the woman, following him to the door.

"To grandpa's, to find Christmas," answered Billy, simply.

"Does ye know where yere grandpap lives?" questioned the woman again.

"Yes'm; that is — not zactly — but I'll know it when I see it. I'm goin' for a Christmas."

"The blissed Lord take care o' ye thin," said the woman; and the door closed.

Somehow everything seemed to grow suddenly gloomy and lonesome, so Billy thought as he walked away. He felt as though he were

leaving friends whom he had known for a long time. The sky, too, which all the morning had been clear and blue, was now changed to a dull leaden hue, the sunshine had disappeared, and after he had gone a little way snow began to fall. Billy began to grow anxious. Still he walked on, hoping at every turn of the road to come in sight of the longed-for Christmas home. After a time he met an old farm wagon rumbling along the road, and he ventured to stop the driver.

"Please, sir, can you tell me where Christmas is?" he asked.

"Chris — who?" questioned the man, suddenly reining up his horses.

"Chris'-mas," said Billy, with much emphasis on the last of the word.

"Oh! Chris M'Masters you probably mean. Why he lives about a mile and a half from here. You keep right on down the road, and you can't miss it."

Then the old wagon rumbled on again, and Billy continued his journey. But it was becoming hard walking now. The snow came down in great flakes, and the driving wind caught it and hurled it into his face until he could hardly see. He kept on, however, for a short distance, when he became so tired and benumbed with cold that he felt he must seek shelter somewhere. A little way across the fields he saw a large barn, with a shed attached, and thither he turned his steps. There was a horse, some mules, and a few sheep in the shed, where they, too, had sought shelter from the cold, and, creeping past, Billy nestled down in the warm, soft hay just

above them. He lay for some time looking down at the animals, and they gave him a pleasant feeling of having company.

"Come in, little lamb and little bird, out of the cold," he said, calling to a lamb and snow-bird that remained outside. "We're at grandpa's now, and it's warm, and we'll have a Christmas. Yes; a real nice Christmas."

Then his ideas became confused, and he dreamily thought the animals were talking to him, and telling how glad they were he had come; and then Billy knew no more.

At twilight the farmer came down from his house to look after his animals, and found the still little form — so still that he feared life would never come back to it again. Tenderly he took poor Billy in his arms and carried him home. Restoratives were at once applied, and after prolonged effort Billy opened his eyes upon the world once more—but not upon the world he once had known, for now he was surrounded by friends.

"I'd like to have him stay with us always, and be my brother, mamma," said little Effie, the farmer's daughter; "but then we don't know who he is?"

"No; but we know who One was who came a little stranger to a stable, one Christmas eve, hundreds of years ago, and how He has said that receiving one such little one in His name, is receiving Him."

"And may we keep him, mamma?"

Mamma looked at papa, and he nodded. And so indeed it came out; at last poor Billy had found Christmas and a home.

## THE SHOEMAKER'S BILL.



ON the bank of the Rhine, where pleasant mountains are reflected in its waters, lies a small village on a considerable height over the high road. Behind the village towers a barren rock, from which look down the remains of an ancient knightly castle. The small village has no church, but only a handsome schoolhouse. In this there lived some years ago, a brave schoolmaster named — stop, I must not name either the village or the man, because perhaps he still lives there, and might not like to be talked about even by the little people who may read this story.

The schoolmaster and his wife had eight children. That was a rich blessing from God; but with the narrow income which the place afforded, it was also no small charge. One hundred and fifty thalers income for the whole year is not much — it comes to barely a half thaler per diem; and if ten people, with a healthy appetite, are daily fed and clothed for that, even on the homeliest German fare, it is easy to see that housekeeping will cost no little work or self-denial.

In the pleasant school-house, therefore, the daily fare was both scanty and simple. Potatoes were the first and last dish, both at dinner and at supper. They had not even butter to eat with their bread, but only salt, and in the morning a dish of porridge or bread and milk, and



on Sunday a cup of weak coffee. These were the greatest delicacies that ever came on to the schoolmaster's table. However, both parents and children were active and healthy, and the latter flourished like roses.

With all their poverty they were a very happy family; for the blessing of God dwelt visibly in the house, and love and peace reigned among parents and children. The schoolmaster was faithful and industrious in his work, and his school did him great credit. The school children were trained to sing capitally; for he was himself well grounded in music, and instructed them in it. His domestic as well as his public life was without a single blemish. For this reason the parish made much of him, and his superiors honored him for his industry and fidelity.

But, as it often happens, the brave schoolmaster remained in his ill-paid post for twelve long years, only encouraged by his faithful wife. From day to day their need increased; the more the children grew, the more did they require clothes and boots. The expenses of these made it more difficult to procure sufficient food; added to these was the anxiety as to how they were to obtain the means to educate the elder children, who were now well grown. The schoolmaster was of a God-fearing and pious disposition. When at any time his heart was full and heavy, he retired into his chamber and prayed to his Heavenly Father, and was comforted; but he could not bear to see tears in his wife's eyes. That distressed him greatly, and the weight of care lay all the heavier on his heart.

The year 1847 came — a severe and sad win-

ter for the poor. The harvest had been a bad one, and a terrible potato disease followed. The price of provisions rose fast and threateningly. Our brave schoolmaster had much to bear that year for the sake of his family. He had a bill at the shoemaker's for twenty-five thalers, which had gradually accumulated, and the poor man did not know when or how he should pay it. The shoemaker would gladly have waited some time for the money; but in his house there was also poverty and want, so he asked the schoolmaster to pay his debt as soon as possible. Care and anxiety came into the school. The poor wife took great pains that her sighs and complaints should not add to her husband's trouble, and it was only at night when he slept that she wept silently. In the day-time she smiled cheerfully, even when her heart was sad and heavy. There were times, however, when she could not be silent on the one absorbing subject; then it was that the pious man took his wife by the hand, looked in her eyes and said, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" When the poor woman was consoled she smiled gently, though sadly, and said, "Yes, dear husband, God loves us still; He will not leave us nor forsake us." And the schoolmaster seated himself at his poor piano, and they sang together their favorite hymn:

•  
'Our God still lives,  
My soul, be not cast down.  
Art thou heavy laden?  
Then turn thee to thy God.  
He is rich in goodness;  
He will raise the feeble;  
His mercy dureth ever;  
His truth it faileth never.  
Remember, O my soul,  
Our Lord and God still lives!'

With these words sorrow took flight; comfort and peace, hope and confidence came to console these mourning souls.

Autumn came; the leaves of the trees were decking themselves in gold, the fields became bare and ever barer, and the birds of passage left the country, to winter in warmer lands. News spread through the village that rejoiced all hearts. The king was coming! So it was rumored on all sides; and the good people who loved him, consulted and deliberated as to how they could best prove their affection for the beloved father of the country, and their joy at his visiting them.

Not far from the village was the king's highway, near to where our brave schoolmaster lived. He was glad of this; for, although he had never seen the king, he loved him dearly. So he asked himself as to whether or not he could on his part prepare some little demonstration of loyal feeling; and after thinking over it, he determined what he should do. He would compose a simple hymn, with words of hearty welcome. For this he required a suitable tune, and to practice his school children in both. They should stand under the nut-tree on the high

road, when the king drove past, to sing the hymn, and in that way to receive and welcome him. The idea commended itself to the schoolmaster the more he thought of it. Perhaps the hymn might please his majesty; and if nothing else, it would surely awaken loyal feelings in the hearts of the school-children.

On a beautiful day in October, when the sun was still warm and shone pleasantly, the schoolmaster ascended the mountain at the back of the village, and seated himself on a piece of rock, from which he got a fine view of the surrounding country. He here composed a simple, but nevertheless a hearty and attractive hymn; the tune for it was soon found, and the children were trained in it. In a few days they were able to sing it capitally, and so the plan was to be carried out. The peasantry wanted to be present in order to hear their children sing, and to speed the king on his journey with a loud hurrah! But there was one care which, with all this, oppressed the heart of the schoolmaster and his wife — his boots were quite in pieces, and even in the upper leather there were unlucky holes. It was not possible that he could appear in these before the king, but the difficulty was to remedy the evil. His coat and hat, too, were not in the best condition. These, however, the tidy hand of his wife could improve. She washed the collar of his coat with soap, and blacked over all the bare places on his hat with ink, thus concealing all glaring defects; but this was not possible with the boots, and he wondered whether the shoemaker would undertake to repair them, although he owed him five and

twenty thalers. He would at all events make the attempt to inquire, in spite of its being an unpleasant task. So he went to the man himself, and with explanations and entreaties tried to move his heart.

The shoemaker was not a hard man; he knew well what it was to pay a debt and not to be able to do so, even with the best intentions, and he had often asked for payment, as he wanted the money himself.

When the schoolmaster showed him his boots, he bent his gray head thoughtfully and pitfully; at last he spoke, "I see that in this case you must be helped, but when am I to receive my money?"

"Help me but this once, dear master," said the teacher; "you know that the king is coming, and I want the little ones to sing before him. In these boots I neither dare nor can appear, therefore help me in my need! I promise you that you shall be paid. If God does not help me in any other way, I will sell my cow and repay you; you know that I keep my word and my promises faithfully."

When he had said this, the schoolmaster felt a heavy burden on his heart. "Sell the cow!" Nothing but the direst need could have wrung that promise from him. Sell the cow!—and then what would become of him and his children? But he had said the word, and given the promise, and he was bound as a man of honor to fulfill them.

"Well," said the shoemaker, "I will take you at your word, and mend the boots."

"Be so good as to do so, and send me a bill

with them, that I may know the extent of my debt to you."

"It shall be done," said the shoemaker, and he seated himself again at his work.

But the poor schoolmaster, though relieved of that care, went away with a heavy heart. The tears came into his eyes when he thought of the immediate future, and wondered what would become of them. He did not wish to go home with a troubled and careworn face, to cause fresh sorrow to his wife. He went first in the open fields, and on to his favorite place on the mountain. There he wept with his whole heart, and the streaming tears relieved him. There he sat still and alone, watching the heavens prayerfully, and consoled himself with the verse

"Soul, remember our Lord still lives."

He then washed his face in the running brook, wiped away all traces of tears, and went home cheerfully. Fortunately his wife did not ask what the shoemaker had said. She knew well what they owed him, and he had evidently kept the boots; so it was clear he had undertaken to repair them — and for the rest, God would care! And, as she did not ask, her husband did not tell her of the promise he had made to the shoemaker.

On Sunday morning, when the schoolmaster had already dressed for going to church, the boots arrived, to his and his wife's great joy. The bill was sent with them. It was made out in rather a crabbed curious manner, and read thus:

"Item — a pair of boots, repaired and  
 soled — the last, if this bill is not  
 paid, having given his word to  
 sell the cow, makes. . . . . 14 Silbergroschen  
 The old debt. . . . . 25 Thalers

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25 Thalers, 14 Silbergroschen

There is, however, an end to one's patience and to the giving of credit; for I want my money myself very much. There it remains, and after this complaint will be made.

TOBIAS WERNER, *Bootmaker.*"

As his wife was still out in the kitchen, the schoolmaster put the bill, which he had read sighing, into the breast pocket of his Sunday coat, so as to conceal it from her, unless she asked for it. She did not ask and there the matter rested.

On the day before which the king's arrival was expected, the schoolmistress asked her husband, "Dear Fritz, have you made a fair copy of the hymn and its tune? It is possible that the king would like to have one, in order that he might afterwards read it to himself."

"You are right, dear Mary," said the schoolmaster; and he added, "you women always think a good bit farther ahead than we men."

Then he went to his cupboard and took out some of his best paper. First he copied the tune in notation, and wrote the first verse underneath. Then followed the other verses, neatly written, till the hymn was completed. He put the copy into his cupboard for the present time, and said to his wife: "Help me in the morning to remember to put it in my pocket and take it with me."

The morning of the longed-for day arrived, and the small village was already in a lively and cheerful stir; for the children, who could not wait for the time, had been walking about, fully dressed, since seven o'clock. The king was expected at ten o'clock, but the little people were out of bed at five, and since then had given their mothers no peace. Even the schoolmaster was ready at last. His wife beheld him with loving pride and satisfaction; for to-day he looked so well, dressed in his very best. His coat, which had served for many years, looked quite clean and decent, though it was darned and blacked over. Even the hat was now fit to be seen. So all was arranged to their satisfaction, and the schoolmaster was about to collect the troup of restless children. Just at the right moment his wife reminded him, "Dear Fritz, do not forget the copy of the hymn;" so he took the paper quickly out of the cupboard and put it in his breast coat pocket. Then he went from the school-house to the children, who were standing already in rank and file, and greeted him with "Good morning, master," in loud and cheerful voices. He arranged the little multitude, and led them slowly out of the village to the road over which the king would drive.

His wife was soon there with the women; the men and notables of the place having gone before them. Not long after the whole village stood waiting and expecting. The schoolmaster arranged the children as they were to stand when they sang. Behind the girls came the women and maidens of the village, and the men and youths were placed on each side. Before them



all stood the schoolmaster, with the chiefs of the community, all dressed in their Sunday and festival garb; and the whole effect was bright and pretty enough.

Hour after hour passed slowly, and the king had not arrived. Soon, however, some one heard a salute fired from the parsonage, which was not far off. "He comes! He comes!" all cried with joyful voice. The children trembled with expectation and curiosity, the schoolmaster had trouble enough to keep them quiet and in order. At last came the master of the post-horses from the neighboring town, with slackened bridle and foaming horses. In the first carriage behind him sat the king, Frederick William IV. The hats flew from off the heads as the carriage approached. The king saw that there was a demonstration of welcome such as he loved, so he ordered the carriage to stop. The schoolmaster gave the signal, and the hymn began. The children sang the simple but beautiful and popular melody, with its hearty words, admirably.

Frederick William, who liked the hymn, listened with great attention, for the words pleased him. Scarcely was it ended, and the three cheers given by the peasantry, than the king signed to the schoolmaster, who approached the carriage with diffidence, and yet with dignity. The king said, "The children have sung beautifully, and I thank you for the welcome; but the hymn and melody are unknown to me, perhaps you have a copy at hand?"

The schoolmaster bowed, felt in his breast-pocket, and produced the copy and gave it to the king. He opened the paper, read it once more

carefully through, and a scarcely perceptible but not unremarked smile passed over his benevolent face, and he asked:

"Have you been here long?"

"Nearly thirteen years, sir," was the answer.

"Is the situation a good one?" said the king. The schoolmaster named his whole income conscientiously. Then said William, "Is that all, and you manage to live upon it?"

"With my wife and eight children," was the answer somewhat sadly made.

A shadow crossed the face of the monarch. He extended his hand to the schoolmaster, thanked him once more, and the carriage flew on to make up for lost time.

Frederick William sank silently back in the corner. He read the hymn once more. It was a successful attempt, and showed the talent of the composer. But with it the king unfolded another paper—it was the shoemaker's bill, which had got accidentally slipped into the copy of the hymn, and had thus got into the king's hands without the schoolmaster having the slightest suspicion of it. The noble prince at once guessed the connection, and resolved what he should do. At the very next station the adjutant on duty was ordered to deliver over a sum, together with the bill, to the burgomaster of the town, with directions to pay the debt at once, and forward the receipted bill to the schoolmaster.

On the evening of the following day our friend sat with his wife alone in their parlor. The children were all gone to rest. The moon shone clear and bright through the window, and

the careful wife, who was glad to save candles and oil, was knitting by the clear rays of the friendly luminary. The heart of her husband was depressed after the excitement of the previous day. He was considering how he should tell his wife of his promise to the shoemaker, and how he should prepare her for the selling of the cow. There was a knock at the door.

"Who can it be?" said the woman. "No neighbor comes so late."

"It is I," answered the voice of the deacon, who was in the habit of delivering official papers when they were addressed to members of his congregation. The schoolmaster opened the door, and the deacon gave him a letter with the words, "From the burgomaster of N——," and went away.

"A letter from the burgomaster! What can he want with me?" said the schoolmaster as he stepped back into the room. His wife went out and fetched a candle, lit it, and placed it on the table whilst he broke the seal and read the letter hastily.

"Can it be possible!" was his exclamation, as he finished it.

His wife sprang in astonishment and fear to his side. Their eyes fell on the shoemaker's bill, under which stood these words, "Paid, with thanks. Tobias Werner."

What could this mean? She could not comprehend the matter; but her husband clasped his hands, and looked, prayerfully and deeply moved, toward heaven. Then he related it all to his faithful wife — what had passed between him and the shoemaker; then the promise which

he had given to sell the cow in order to pay the bill. He told her further how he had put the bill in his pocket, and afterwards placed the copy of the hymn there also. The bill had probably slipped into the strong, stiff paper, so he had given them together to the king without knowing it. The beloved king had caused the bill to be paid, and sent the receipt through the burgomaster.

"God's richest blessing on our noble king," cried the happy woman, joyfully.

Her husband could not so readily join; for he asked, sorrowfully, "What the king must have thought of him?"

"Do not trouble yourself about it," said his wife. "So great a man is far cleverer than any of us; that I saw at once, and composed myself. He has guessed how the case lies — that is why he paid the bill; and for that we must heartily thank our God. Do not worry yourself, but rejoice over the blessing sent to us."

These words settled the matter, and filled her husband's heart with deep and thankful joy. But something better was yet to come. The noble king, who so gladly helped and did good when he could, made inquiries about the schoolmaster, and received the best testimony as to his industry and fidelity. The authorities also confirmed what he had said about his income. In the same year he received one of the best appointments in the district, which had been just vacated, besides a further grant from the queen of fifty thalers; and this was to be paid to him till his youngest child should be confirmed.

All this God's wisdom and will worked out of the shoemaker's bill. Never had more thankful hearts blessed the generous king, nor faithful hearts besought the goodness of God to rest upon him. Their trust in Him was thereby enriched and strengthened, and ever since, in every affliction, they clung more firmly to their favorite verse:

"God liveth ever!

Wherefore, soul, despair thou never!

Our God is good; in every place

His love is known, His help is found;

His mighty arm and tender grace

Bring good from ills that hover us round."

## HANS AND GRETCHEN.



BY MRS. H. M. GOODWIN.

**O**VER the sea, in Saxony, Santa Claus is known as the "Christ-child," who now comes on Christmas Eve with coveted remembrances to rich and poor, old and young, far more universally than in the dear "Sunset-Land," as America is poetically called by the Germans.

In the time of our story, however, his visits were not so universal, and it is to be feared that sometimes longing little hearts in the humble homes of the poor — of the peasants especially — felt themselves sadly neglected.

It was in one of these extremely humble cottages, in the vicinity of Leipzig, that a little family of four persons dwelt — a widow, with her two children and aged mother — all dependent chiefly upon the labors of the widow for the supply of their daily wants, as the grandmother was too feeble to do much more than knit coarse yarn into cheap mittens and stockings for the Leipzig shops, which paid her but few groschens for her labor.

The beautiful Christmas-time was coming to the rich and happy; but it was a sad time to the poor cottagers, for with it was coming the dreadful rent-day — dreadful because there was nothing with which to meet it — and two pairs of hungry, eager eyes watched one morning after

the weary, disheartened mother, as she took her way to her work in the city.

Full well did brave little Hans and his faithful little sister Gretchen know how cheerful the town must look, with all the bright, beautiful garments and wares in the shop-windows and the endless wonders of playthings paraded everywhere, to possess any one of which would have made them supremely happy. And they knew equally well that, unless the dear, wonderful Christ-child held them in unusual remembrance, nothing very joyous was likely to come to them. They talked together of the grand fair in the market place and of the evergreens being sold in such numbers in the Augustus-platz, till at length, while little Gretchen had been secretly praying to the merciful Christ-child to think of them and help the poor, tired, discouraged mother and grandmother, a bright thought started inside the little bullet-shaped head of Hans, who exclaimed, "I say, Gretchen, let us earn some money; lots of money." And when he had sufficiently enjoyed his sister's look of admiring surprise, he replied to her whispered inquiry, "How, brother Hans?" by pointing to a very little bit of a spruce tree which was growing in a corner of their little yard. "We'll just dig up that tree and take it into town and sell it — oh! for ever so much money; and will just never say a word to mother till we can put the rent-money around her plate, and some presents at grandmother's. And then we will see what for ourselves."

Little Gretchen was too delighted with the idea of enacting such charming magic

to question soberly its practicability, and lent all her best energies to the grand plan. It was not long before the little tree was lifted proudly to the shoulder of the sturdy boy, and the two children, with hearts as happy as beat inside the wealthiest children in Saxony, trudged off to town, unmindful of their thin garments or stockingless feet and uncovered heads, which the pitiless wind smote cruelly.

"Such lots of money," repeated Hans, as they beguiled the long walk with pictures of mother's surprise and grandmother's incredulity.

Not a few men and women smiled as the children approached the stands in Augustus Platz, where the beautiful evergreens were selling; scarcely any trees, however, bringing more than ten or fifteen groschens, more bringing only five — equal to  $12\frac{1}{2}$  cents American money.

The children felt that they must not be in the way, and very sensibly removed to a little distance, where they could seat themselves upon the cold stands and rest their weary bodies without fear of being run over.

For a long time nobody noticed them, except to smile; but still they bravely waited, and admired their treasure, despite hunger and cold. At last a gentleman, who had searched persistently among the trees for one sufficiently small for his purpose, noticed our little group, which he approached, asking if the little tree was for sale.

"O! yes, sir," quite boldly answered the boy, the little girl modestly confirming it with a little nod.

"And how much does it cost?" asked the



gentleman, as he took the tree in his hand and examined it with evident satisfaction.

"A thaler, sir" (30 groschen).

"A thaler!" repeated the man, in blank amazement, handing back the tree. "It is just what I promised my little girl; but I think you must keep it. A thaler is quite too much for it!"

"Five groschen," whispered little Gretchen, modestly offering the tree.

"Shall I take it for five groschen?"

"For a thaler," persisted Hans, who could not endure to contemplate so sudden a wreck of his grand hopes.

The gentleman was turning away with a look of displeasure in his face, when Gretchen pleadingly exclaimed: "Please take it for five groschen. Please be good, dear Hans, and sell it for that!"

While the gentleman attentively regarded the children, he said kindly: "I think you had better sell it to me for five groschen. No one else will pay you so much for it, and I will pay you for taking it home for me. Will you do it?"

Hans yielded; but with evident sorrow, if not mortification.

As the children walked by the side of their friend, the little wooden shoes clattering on the pavement, while their teeth chattered in their heads, he inquired with feigned harshness: "Bübchen [little boy] why did you ask a thaler for that tree, when no one else would have thought of asking five groschen for it?" "Because, sir," bravely answered Hans, with a suppressed sob in his voice, "it was the only tree ever planted in our yard, and I was beginning

to earn lots of money to help pay mother's rent at Christmas, and to buy comforts for her and granny, if I could, and ——." Here the boy very suspiciously paused.

"So! Then that's it, is it?" why doesn't your mother pay her own rent?"

"She worked so hard in the hot harvest field that she got very ill; then there was ever so much time lost, and medicine to buy, and we had nothing more to sell—not so much as a feather. And there are so many to work it makes wages low, and bread and faggots have raised!"

"So! And you've no papa?"

"Not since Gretchen here was a baby. She can't remember him. But I can, and how when he was alive the holy Christ-child used to remember us!"

"So!" again responded the gentleman. "And does He never come now?"

Hans dolefully shook his head. But Gretchen said timidly: "I have heard that He would come if we are real good and pray hard enough to Him."

"And was that what made you so good as to sell the tree so cheap? And do you propose to help Hans earn by praying?"

She rather doubtfully nodded her little head and looked steadfastly on the ground before her. But her friend saw, while the ghost of a smile flitted from his face, that her blue lips quivered with something more than the cold.

They had now reached the beautiful home; and as they were about to hand him the tree he bade them bring it into the hall, and ordered the servant to take them into the kitchen and

give them hot soup and brodchens (rolls). While they were eating a supper which to little Gretchen seemed better than anything she had ever before tasted, the good housewife, who had been interested in them, was busily searching her chests for warm, cast-off clothing — stockings, kerchief, and cap; which were straightway put on when the supper was finished, the joy of the children manifesting itself in shy looks, half-suppressed delight, and words of hearty thankfulness. By the time they had received the extra groschen for taking the tree to the house they had quite forgotten the coveted thaler, and, kissing the hands which had dealt with them so generously, they were bounding off, with a farewell look at their beloved tree, yet in the hall, when the gentleman called out to them:

“Stop, children. Are you quite sure you know the way home?”

“Yes, sir; thank you. We can go like bees to the hive.”

“Tell me, then, where the hive is and how you reach it, that I may know you are not mistaken.”

“First, then,” proudly answered Hans, “we go to Kœnigsplatz; then through Windmuehlen Strasse, out upon the road toward Thonberg as far as Napoleon’s monument, where the biggest fight was; and there we turn toward the sunset, and just before we get to the little village, in the first little house all by itself, with the peaked roof coming above the paling, we shall find Granny, wondering, I think, where we are.”

“So! That is good! Run then and find her,

and don't let the heavy carts run over little Gretchen."

Then with mutual adieus and satisfaction they separated, the children bounding off with hearts more joyous in their contentment than they had been with their extravagant hopes in the early morning. Then, too, such unexpected kindness, with the hot supper and warm stockings and headcovers, had made a new world for them; and they had received so much that little Gretchen scarcely dared think more of the Christ-child.

In the two intervening days before Christmas Hans devised various plans for earning his "lots of money;" but, strive as he would, by seeking to do errands in the town, opening drosky doors for passengers, and guiding strangers to different streets, etc., he could only now and then add a few pfennigs (ten of which here in Saxony make a groschen) to his little store, which would have seemed great wealth if he had not wished to do so much with it.

If ever he was discouraged, Gretchen was ready to cheer him with words of comfort and sympathy; but they were each a little sad when they found on Christmas Eve that they had but seven groschen and five pfennigs. It was a good deal of money for them, to be sure; but far too little for the dreadful rent, which would be more dreadful still if it should not be paid. They looked a long time at the little coins, all spread out on the stone floor in the little corner where they were accustomed to play and invent wonderful stories for one another. Hans's face was anxious

and clouded; but Gretchen's wide-open eyes seemed only full of earnest thought.

"Seven and five," she repeated slowly. "I'll tell you what, Hans, don't you remember hearing Granny read out of the Bible how Christ once wanted ever so much bread to feed crowds of people, and he had only five loaves and two fishes, and He somehow made them go round, so that everybody had enough and more? I believe the holy Christ-child could make these groschen and pfennigs go round, if only He could know about it. I think I'll pray. Won't *you*, Hans?" Hans was silent and disturbed.

"It would be dreadful to have to leave our home, and no place to go to," urged Gretchen, and she gently attempted to lead Hans away. But he hastily gathered up the coins, and after a while yielded, as he usually did when his sister pleaded. Sadly they climbed the ladder leading to the loft containing the little bins of straw and rugs called their beds. And, kneeling there, little Gretchen told the story of their woes and besought the dear Christ-child to make the groschen enough to preserve to them the home which had never before seemed so sumptuous and precious. And Hans added a prayer for work and wages, that he might add to the scanty sums earned by the hardest toil of his discouraged mother.

The next morning, before the sun had risen, the children had dressed and stolen softly down the ladder, with mingled hopes and fears, which became strongly colored with unbelief as they saw only their dear, sad-hearted mother patiently kindling a scanty fire from their almost exhaust-

ed store of faggots. The little kitchen was cold and desolate. Neither sunlight nor firelight as yet brightened it. Scarcely a word was spoken. Each felt the burden and importance of the day, but in degrees according to their experience and nature.

While Hans was waiting for the arranging of the plates and black bread for their breakfast, that he might also lay in a row around his mother's plate his little offerings, he stepped to the window, followed by Gretchen, and looked out into the yard. The sun was just rising, and oh! wonder of wonders! what a sight it revealed to their astonished, unbelieving eyes. There in the little corner, over whose bareness they had more than once sighed since the absence of the little tree, was a grand bewilderment. Nothing else than that same tree carefully replanted, and bedecked in right royal Christmas garniture and surrounded with parcels too large and weighty for the slender branches. With a shout of joyful, exultant surprise Hans unfastened the door and rushed out, followed by Gretchen, who was awed into deepest silence with what was before her.

"The blessed Christ-child surely heard," she thought to herself, and quietly folded her hands in grateful contemplation of the beauty and abundance before her. There was the beloved tree, laden with rosy apples, nuts, and most wonderful cakes, that represented all the animals in the known world, together with gingerbread hearts and rich buns, flaming with bright sugar trimmings. There were toys and pictures, too, for herself and Hans — more than they had ever

dreamed of having. Even a dear little china doll, the first she had ever possessed and to which her little heart yearned with a true motherly instinct. There were mittens and tippets, and beautiful little gilt and silver balls, as though the tree had been bedecked for a child of fortune — everything so grand! Then those parcels! “What could be in them!” “Yes, what could be in them! And how came they there?” asked again and again the astonished mother and trembling grandmother, who had hastened out to discover the cause of Hans’s shouts.

“I know what’s in that one!” said he, pointing to a particular parcel. “It’s just a goose. You can see its feet as plain as day through the paper.” And, taking it up to examine it, he continued: “But it tells a big story, for it says ‘A present from Hans and his little sister to their mother,’ and we never knew a word about it, did we, Greta?” But “Greta” made no answer. She was thinking. And the others were very busy carrying into the cottage and untying parcels— large and small—butter, sugar, coffee, and beautiful white brodchens. What a feast! compared with their usual fare of dry black bread; or of soup made by boiling that same black bread in water, seasoned with pepper and salt, and possibly an onion, with very rarely a little milk to vary the relish. Then there were stuffs for a dress and apron for Gretchen, a jacket and trousers for Hans, and some nice woolen neck-kerchiefs and white caps for the mother and grandmother. Were ever people so happy? All but Gretchen forgot for the moment the dreadful rent. But even the sweet little

dolly, already showing such remarkable virtues, could not entirely beguile her thoughts from the needed money. She had prayed for that; but not for these. Hadn't she, after all, been heard? Must they yet go from their home, while yet they seemed to rich — richer than they had ever been in her life before? 'Twas certainly passing strange.

In the meantime her mother, all tremulous with her joyous surprise, had unwrapped the fat goose, exclaiming: "How nicely it's dressed! And the giblets are in it! How glad I am; for now, mother, you can have such a nice giblet soup as you have not tasted in years, I warrant. Put the big saucepan with water in it over the fire, Hans, and we will soon have a soup making as will not be easy to forget." And, holding up the goose, she shook it, that the giblets might fall upon the table. Out came a weight; but, instead of common giblets, there appeared a common leather purse, which the poor woman seized with a wild cry and hastily opened, to find four silver thalers.

She counted them aloud and held them up to view, amid the hurrahs of Hans, whose leapings and prancings were interrupted by little Gretchen, who had suddenly dropped her doll and clasped his neck with her arms, exclaiming: "See! dear Hans, we *thought* the good Christ-child would make the groschen enough to go around if we only told Him. Let us not eat in the house He has given again to us"—"especially of giblet soup," roguishly interposed Hans — "till we have thanked Him for his great goodness."



## THE SPARROWS.



BY CELIA THAXTER.

In the far-off land of Norway,  
Where the winter lingers late,  
And long for the singing birds and flowers  
The little children wait,

When at last the summer ripens,  
And the harvest is gathered in,  
And food for the bleak, drear days to come  
The toiling people win,

Through all the land the children  
In the golden fields remain  
Till their busy little hands have gleaned  
A generous sheaf of grain ;

All the stalks by the reapers forgotten  
They glean to the very least,  
To save till the cold December,  
For the sparrows' Christmas feast.

And then through the frost-locked country  
There happens a wonderful thing:  
The sparrows flock, north, south, east, west,  
For the children's offering.

Of a sudden, the day before Christmas,  
The twittering crowds arrive,  
And the bitter, wintry air at once  
With their chirping is all alive.

They perch upon roof and gable,  
On porch and fence and tree,  
They flutter about the windows  
And peer in curiously,

And meet the eyes of the children,  
Who eagerly look out,  
With cheeks that bloom like roses red,  
And greet them with welcoming shout,

On the joyful Christmas morning,  
In front of every door  
A tall pole, crowned with clustering grain,  
Is set the birds before.

And which are the happiest truly  
It would be hard to tell—  
The sparrows who share in the Christmas cheer  
Or the children who love them well!

How sweet that they should remember  
With faith so full and sure,  
That the children's bounty awaited them  
The whole wide country o'er!

When this pretty story was told me,  
By one who had helped to rear  
The rustling grain for the merry birds  
In Norway, many a year,

I thought that our little children  
Would like to know it too,  
It seems to me so beautiful,  
So blessed a thing to do—

To make God's innocent creatures see  
In every child a friend,  
And on our faithful kindness  
So fearlessly depend.

## THE HERMIT OF THE HILLS.



**I**N a book called "*The Irvington Stories*," written by Mrs. M. E. Dodge, is a beautiful and touching Christmas story, which no doubt some of you have read, called "The Hermit of the Hills." A poor, miserable, lonely, ill-natured old man lived in a hovel on the side of a hill; and he was so cross to the village children that they were afraid of him, for when any of them came near his hut, he would run after them with a big stick in his hand, and threaten to break their bones.

Well, once on a time, just before Christmas, some of the boys and girls of the village ventured out to the hovel of "Old Pop," as he was called, and asked him to let them cut down a young hemlock that stood near, that they might have it for a Christmas tree. This made him very angry, and, brandishing his big stick, he ran furiously towards them. All scampered off in fear, but on looking back they saw that he had fallen and could not rise.

One tender-hearted little girl named Elsie Brown, turned back to help the old man. All the rest scampered away.

Without a thought of danger, the sweet little Samaritan hurried back to the spot where Old Pop was lying; no stick in his listless hand now.

"Are you hurt?" whispered Elsie, bending over him, but starting back with a shudder as she saw his white lips and the blood trickling

down over his furrowed cheek and long gray beard.

There was no answer.

Recovering her self-possession in an instant, the noble-hearted child rushed into the hut for water. Finding none, she seized an old earthen pitcher, lacking both handle and spout, and ran to the stream near by. Around it ice lay in the hollows, holding with a firm clutch the yellow leaves that had fallen there in the soft Indian-summer days. Elsie sprang over them, never pausing, as at any other time she would have done, to indulge in those blessed little slides so dear to school-girls. In a moment she was hastening back, with her pitcher full, toward the injured man.

His senses had returned, and he was trying to rise as Elsie approached.

"Ah, you little ragamuffin," he growled, looking drearily at her, "wait until I get at you! — you shall feel my big stick!"

"I am sorry, sir," said Elsie, never pausing, but hurrying toward him, and even laying her hand upon his shoulder. "I am very sorry you fell; indeed I am. See, here is water; let me bathe your head — you have cut it badly."

"Here! none of your tricks!" with a savage scowl. "Be off with you, or I'll pitch you down the hill!"

Elsie answered, resolutely,

"No; you wouldn't hurt a little girl like me, I am sure. Come into the hut, and when I have bathed your wound and bound up your head, then I'll go. It is cold out here, even in the sunshine."

He looked at her fixedly for a moment, and muttered, "It is cold in there, too. Go back — go to your home and let the old man die."

"But you are not going to die," laughed Elsie, shaking her head at him, though she trembled all over at his strange manner. "You have only a cut on your temple, and you couldn't die of that, even if you wanted to;" and she began busily to gather the pieces of broken branches that lay scattered on the side of the hill.

"Here! let that wood alone!" cried the old man, now fairly upon his feet, yet looking like one in a dream.

"Yes, in a moment," was Elsie's good-natured reply, as she bustled into the hut with her apron full. Old Pop lost not an instant in stumbling in after her.

Ah, little Elsie — kind little Elsie! — you have dared too far! No; he does not harm her. He crouches upon a rough bench near the hearthstone and watches her movements in silence.

There were a few smouldering embers left. Elsie scraped them together with a stick, heaped first a few dry leaves, then the twigs upon them, and kneeling lower, blew with all her little might into their midst, shutting her eyes very tightly, for the ashes were flying into her face.

Snap! crack! the wood was in a blaze! Placing two or three larger sticks upon the top, Elsie rose with a solemn, business-like air:

"Ah, you are very pale and faint yet; you must wear my cloak until the room is warm, if it ever can get warm with all these cracks in

the roof;" and she wrapped a coarse but bright garment about his shoulders.

He pushed it uneasily away; no anger in his manner now; no kindness, either; "I am not cold; go home."

"Very soon I will," said the child, cheerily, running for the pitcher of water and breaking its thin film of ice as she came in again, the ruddy gleam of the fire playing upon her face.

"Oh, you haven't any rag here, have you? Well, my apron will do;" and she dipped a corner into the water. "Now you must let me wash away that ugly blood."

Either the wound was smarting sorely, or Old Pop was stupefied by his fall, for he made no resistance. Softly and tenderly as snowflakes fell the touches of Elsie's hand upon that bowed head. "It is not much," she said, when at last the blood was all carefully washed away. "You should hold cold water to the bump; that's what mother always does for me. And now, if I only had a cobweb!"

This humble wish was easily met in the rickety hut, almost by the reaching of her hand, for spiders had woven there unmolested for many a day. The blood was soon staunch'd to Elsie's full content.

"Now I'll go," said the child quietly, as, with nimble hands she placed fresh sticks upon the fire. "Do you feel any better, sir?"

"Hey?" very gruffly.

"You feel better, I hope. Does your head hurt you now, sir?"

"No; go home."

Elsie moved sadly toward the door, and then

— child that she was — a sudden impulse caused her to go back to him.

“Poor old man,” she almost whispered, “your heart has been broken.”

His start frightened her. She believed he would strike her on the spot, but he only lifted his head, and looked wearily into her face.

“Why, child?”

“Because — because you are so very cross; and you cannot be cheered even in these merry Christmas times. Why it comes day after to-morrow! You surely will not be the only person in the whole world who does not keep Christmas?” and Elsie stared at him in innocent dismay.

“Christmas!” echoed Old Pop, gloomily. “I have a’most forgotten what that is.”

“Forgotten Christmas! Why, I think if I were to grow twice as old as you are, I could never forget that! It’s the dear Christ’s birthday, you know; and every one, even the most miserable, cannot help being happy on that day.”

“Happy!” whispered Old Pop under his breath, and looked absently at Elsie as she seated herself at his feet — “Happy?”

“Yes, happy,” repeated Elsie, gently. “Shall I tell you all about it?”

The old man nodded, never taking his eyes from hers.

“Why, it is Christ’s birthday; and was He not a good — a holy child?”

He did not reply; but a gleam, like something from the past shot across his furrowed face, and Elsie read her answer.

“Oh, He was so pure — so noble! Never did

He hold one harsh or wicked thought; mother has told me this often. He could not, you know; never had the slightest quarrel; never did anything the least bit wrong, and was always making everybody about Him happy — just completely good and wise. Oh, He was a blessed, blessed child, I am sure, and His days must have been like sunshine, with none of the dreadful trials that came to Him afterwards. You've heard all about it, haven't you? how they persecuted and tortured Him, and all for no harm He had done whatever?"

The old man nodded, as, with troubled eyes, he gazed into that tearful, upturned face.

"But it's all over now," resumed Elsie, brightening. "The saints in heaven are never sad, and surely He is gladdest of all; and whenever His birthday comes, oh! I am certain all His childish thoughts must come back to Him. Then He visits the earth as the Christ-child — comes to see all of us little children. We cannot see Him, but I know He comes and He blesses us, and He makes us, oh, so happy! Mother says He enters everybody's heart and whispers, 'Love the children for My sake,' and He makes them feel just like giving all the boys and girls a holiday, and having lovely green Christmas-trees for them, hung with toys and all kinds of beautiful things; and the rich give to one another, and to the poor, and the poor are loving and gentle to each other, for He tells them how He loves them and everybody."

"Everybody, child?"

"Yes, I am sure He does," cried Elsie, clasping her hands.



"No, He does not — not always," sighed the old man. "He has not crept into my heart, little girl; I am lonely, lonely."

Ah, but He will, though!" insisted Elsie, looking brightly into his eyes, and shaking her sunny curls against his breast. "He will; it is not too late yet."

The old man shook his head, gazing wistfully into her glowing face.

"Yes; He will; I am sure of it. Why the wood has nearly burned away! Poor old man; how many, many cold days you must sit here shivering, while we are warm and comfortable down in the village. Why don't you come and live there, and get nice clothes and —"

The hermit glared at her so wildly that, in very fear, Elsie moved toward the door. Standing outside, she looked in to say:

"Good-bye, Be sure to keep that bump wet. May some of us children come soon, and gather wood for you?"

"No, no, little girl. Here, wait a moment." And with a half-troubled, half-pleased expression on his worn face, Old Pop picked up a large dry maple-leaf from the floor, and proceeded to take something from a rough box in the corner of his cabin.

Elsie was only a child, and a girl-child, too; who can blame her that she raised on tip-toe with curiosity?

"Here child, take this."

It was a leaf full of coarse maple-sugar. Elsie felt disappointed, scarce knowing why; but no duchess could have received it with truer politeness than she.

"Thank you, sir."

The mute figure, as it stood watching Elsie tripping back over the hills, was different in its aspect from that which two hours before had forbidden her approach. The same form and face, but with no fierceness in its gesture, no anger in its look.

Shall we tell you of all that happened after this? The old man's heart was softened toward children. He was not so poor as he seemed. Next day he went to the village and bought toys, and books, and sweetmeats, and on Christmas invited all the children far and near, and gave them presents and a feast. He seemed like a new man. All his hardness, and anger, and misery had vanished. Elsie was there, of course, and one of the happiest of Old Pop's little friends. And what do you think happened next? Well, the story goes on:

Old Pop's name fairly rang in the village on that Christmas day; and nearly every time it was spoken an unuttered blessing went with it.

Meantime, the changed old man turned from his long, wistful gaze as the last loiterer disappeared. Elsie and the schoolmaster were still beside him.

"We must go now, my friend," said the latter, extending his hand, "I promised this little girl's mother that I would take her back before sundown.

Elsie clung to Old Pop's cloak.

"Come with us," she urged; "do come; we cannot go and leave you here alone on these cold hills."

"But I am not alone any more, my child,"

said the old man, gently stroking Elsie's curls as he spoke.

"Oh, I am so glad! I shall love the dear Christ-child more than ever now!" cried Elsie. "I knew He would come to you on Christmas Eve. But you surely won't stay here all by yourself, now that every one will love you?"

"Every one, child?"

"Yes, every one; why not? But what makes you always call me 'child?' My name is Elsie."

The hermit gave a sharp cry and would have fallen had not the schoolmaster held him with a strong arm.

"Elsie!" he repeated, in a whining voice, as they led him into the warm hut. "I had a little girl called Elsie once; where is she? Oh, she is gone, gone!"

Raising his eyes, he looked yearningly into the child's face. He shook his head.

"No, no, not like my Elsie; she was taller, her eyes were darker — black hair; she was all I had, but she left me. She did come back once, but I drove her away; and then, then," he continued, raising his voice almost to a scream, "she died; died and uncared for; no friend, not one to—"

He stopped short, glaring wildly upon them.

"Oh," cried Elsie, shuddering, "do not look so! Speak to me! For the dear Christ-child's sake, do not look so!"

The schoolmaster bent over him soothingly.

"My friend, God is good; there is some balm for this trouble, if you will wait His time."

The old man bowed his head upon Elsie's shoulder, sobbing like a little child.

"Poor Old Pop!" she murmured, patting his arm softly. "There now, you will come; I know you will. Mother will be so good, so kind to you — she is to everybody — though she has never seen you. Say you'll come: it's too lonely for you here."

"Elsie," exclaimed the schoolmaster, who had walked to the door for an instant, "here is your mother coming up the hill!"

Elsie gave a joyous cry. "Oh, I am so glad! Now you will see mother," she whispered to the old man, in a tone that implied that "seeing mother" was a balm for every earthly ill.

"Your long absence has alarmed her," said the schoolmaster. "Come in," he added, holding wide the door. "Elsie is here, safe with her friends; forgive me for not taking her to you long ago. But how did you find us?"

"The village boys showed me the way," panted the mother as, flushed with her rapid walk over the hills, she walked up to Elsie, throwing a quick look of curiosity upon the old man as she spoke.

He raised his head suddenly at the voice.

"Elsie," screamed the mother, "who is this?"

"Who, mother? Why Old Pop that used to chase us children, you know; but he's real good now. I love him ever so m—"

Even while she was speaking, the hermit, after staring fixedly at the comely woman, like one in a puzzled dream, staggered toward her with outstretched hands.

"Elsie!"

"Father!"

Locked in each other's arms, laughing and

crying by turns, they could not see the look of wonderment in the child's eyes, or even hear the schoolmaster, who, with lifted head, exclaimed fervently:

“God is good!”

That night father, daughter and grandchild sat together by a cheerful hearth in the village—Elsie's home, where for the past four months she had lived alone with her mother.

And so father and daughter, who had been separated for years, because the daughter had married against her father's will, were restored to each other through the loving kindness of little Elsie. Neither of them knew, until that meeting on the hill, that the other was alive.

## THE FLIGHT.



BY DR. CHR. BARTH.

(Translated from the German by J. H. Spielman.)

**T**HIS time, dear children, the narrator leads you to the coast of Kent, in Southern England. Upon the lofty beach stands a fisher-hut, inhabited by a poor fisherman and his wife. But they are not much longer to inhabit it, at least, not both of them. The fishing craft is not free from danger; you know that even on the little sea of Gennesaret a storm sometimes arose, which terrified the mariners—how much more on the vast ocean where the billows at times become a hundred times larger than a fishing smack!

One day the fisherman, in vigorous health and good spirits, sailed out alone on the high sea to cast his net, and, should God accompany it with His blessing, to make a plentiful draught; for the poor man and his family were wholly dependent on the income of the fishing trade for their livelihood. If he were successful, he might return in the evening; his wife at least, hoped so, and in this hope, she gazed after him as long as she could see the little ship, till at length it only appeared a little black or white speck in the distance, and finally vanished entirely from her view. Then she seated herself near the open window of the hut with her sewing work—she was sewing a shirt for her husband—and from time to time looked out upon the sea, and

along the horizon, to see whether there were any clouds arising that might portend a storm.

The people who dwell near the sea have a keen, experienced eye, and soon observe what a cloud portends, just as a man deeply skilled in human nature can read in the eyes of another whether his intentions are good or evil. The cloud there on the distant ocean's brink, continually rising higher, causes her breast to palpitate uneasily; at length she can no longer rest in her chair; she is constrained to go out and look about in the open air and see whether any danger is threatening. The wind presages evil, and in a short time the whole heaven is overcast; the sea begins to be troubled; the wind grows to a storm that dashes the rain from the North, and rushes and roars around the hut as if forced out of great organ pipes. Soon nothing more of the sea can be seen than the nearest surges that break upon the shore; the air is full of spray and fog and rain-drops. The poor woman is again seated at her work by the window which she cannot close, although the rain dashes in through it and saturates her work, for her heart is near breaking, so full is it of fear, and — she must have air. Sometimes she arises from want of breath and paces the little apartment, wrings her hands, sighs, and, from the very depth of her soul, exclaims: "Oh God, be merciful, and bring back my husband safe to the shore!"

But she is forced to seat herself again, and with straining glances she looks for the little ship, whether it may not be seen upon the beach. She watches for it as wistfully as the mother

of Sisera did for the rolling wheels of his chariot. There, is not that the white sail of his boat? Alas! no, it is only the deceptive foam on the top of a billow; and he must have drawn in his sail certainly during such a storm. But more and more gloomy grows the prospect; the evening twilight quickly passes over into dark night, and the distress of the anxious wife continually increases. She lights the lamp and places it at the other window so that the unfortunate man, when he reaches the shore, may have a beacon-light; then she gives her little boy, who has grown tired and sleepy, his evening meal, and puts him to bed. But she does not venture to lie down; her husband might still come; her anxiety will not permit her to sleep. And as she can no longer see, she listens with the most painful attention; possibly a call of his, piercing the roar of the tempest, may become audible. She has dry clothes ready for him, and the tea-pot on the fire, to revive him immediately when he comes. Often she goes to the door and listens, regardless of the pelting rain that pours in upon her; for she does not think of self, but only of him. "O if he only were here even though he had taken nothing!" then she seats herself again at the window, and from great weakness and grief sinks into a troubled sleep, from which an alarming vision again rouses her, as if his voice calling for help had fallen on her ear.

What a distressing night was this! — but it passed by, as must the longest nights, as must the nights in the North that continue through half the year, as must the night of death, upon which the joyous resurrection morning will fol-



low. That certainly was no joyous morning which followed upon this night. The tempest, it is true, had passed away; the morning sun ascended into a cloudless sky; the sea alone still ran high and beat upon the beach with restless, turbulent billows; but nothing far and wide was to be seen of a vessel, however much the strained glances of the deathly faint wife — alas, I should have said widow — searchingly turned from side to side.

Here sat poor Margareta on a cliff upon the shore and sorrowfully gazed out over the troubled waves; her hair fluttered in the fresh morning wind; the little boy, her only child, sat on her knee and grieved her still more by his childlike questions. Alas, long might she still have remained sitting and waiting here, until the little boat should toss hither over the rolling surges. Her eye should never more see it; her spouse, for whom she kept vigil, was long since sunk in its roaring deep, and the billows over which he had so often courageously rowed, now rolled over his corpse.

At last the sorrowing woman, deeply as it pained her, was forced to believe that she vainly awaited the return of one sunk in the deep, and that her heavenly Father, at this time, was not pleased to answer her prayer as she wished. Poor widow, where should she find consolation? It is true she had no reason to look upon her husband as spiritually lost, for he had been a Christian, and for many years had lived in the faith of the living God and of his Son, Jesus Christ; and in the most absorbing moments of his cumbersome and dangerous vocation, had

never forgotten his Creator. He was a plain, unlettered man, but found comfort in recurring to the disciples of Christ, some of whom also had been fishermen and never had visited a college. He was a man abrupt in speech, but in his intercourse with other men endeavored by his peaceful, submissive and quiet manner, to prove himself a disciple of Him who gave Himself a ransom for us. His pity was manifested more in deed than in words, and though habitually he said little concerning spiritual things, his parting words to his wife, spoken immediately before his last course, sunk with so much more impressiveness into her heart. "Margareta," he had said, "at all times put your trust in the Lord: for if we fear God, we need fear nothing else. Train up your child, while he is young to obedience and filial respect towards his mother, then he can also be led, by the grace of God, to render obedience to God and to reverence His commandments." After expressions of this kind the unfortunate husband certainly would not have passed into eternity otherwise than in a good frame of mind; his thoughts resting upon God, death could not have overtaken him unprepared. Although this was very tranquilizing to her sorrowing heart, it was, on the other hand, so much the more painful to lose such a spouse, on whom, because of his unwavering trust in God, one could so much more securely lean; and it cost the good woman, Margareta, no small effort to submit without resistance and murmuring, to the will of God.

Her path in life certainly was no easy one, for she was now constrained to provide for her-

self and her child those things which had before been so generously supplied by the faithfulness and diligence of her husband. Besides, Margaretawasled into an error that parents may often make, and the evil consequences of which never fail to manifest themselves; her excessive anxiety lest she should lose her son (an apprehension quite easily explained in the case of a widow who has an only child, but by no means justified) caused her in a certain measure to worship him. She was continually troubled by the fear that an inclination to follow the craft of his unfortunate father would grow upon him and he would likewise perish; and so exacted the solemn promise from him that he would never cherish a desire to go out with the neighbors on their fishing excursions — as if it were impossible to break a limb on level ground, or drown in a gutter, a circumstance that occurred here in the month of August, 1850. (In Germany, about the time the author was engaged writing this little narrative.) She supposed that if she thus bound him, he would not run the risk of becoming a fisher; for it never once occurred to her that he would ever attempt to go to sea alone. It is by no means prudent, however, to demand promises from children and irresolute youth, which, after all, are mostly broken either through thoughtlessness or weakness, since that which is forbidden only becomes so much more enticing. Of a different nature altogether, are Divine prohibitions; for every child already must be brought to comprehend that their transgression leads to ruin.

Willie, the son of the widow, kept his pro-

mise, nevertheless, and listened not to the persuasive speeches of his father's old fishing associates or his own youthful companions, who would gladly have taken him along on their fishing expeditions. He was now twelve years old, a fine, vigorous boy whom one might well have taken to be fourteen. Whenever it was possible for him to render his mother any assistance, he did so with the greatest willingness; but no fixed occupation had yet been resolved on by him, and in truth, there were but few employments to be found on those coasts besides those of fishing.

But another heavy trial now visited the poor widow and her son. Margareta fell sick. She had been exposed to cold, damp weather, and thereby had suffered so severe an attack of catarrhal fever, that she was quite unable to do any work. During this painful illness she manifested great patience and resignation. Willie so tenderly loved his mother that he gladly would have taken upon himself her afflictions, had it been possible for him to do so; but this he could not do; you know there is only One of whom it can be said: "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." On the contrary, he continually cast about in his mind for some plan that would enable him to earn a little money with which to buy sugar and tea, as well as some flannel to keep her warm and thereby make her sufferings more tolerable. But no other means occurred to him but fishing. Should he succeed as the neighbors did, in catching a few fishes and in selling them, he would secure the means to obtain all these desirable things for his

mother, and thus prepare much comfort for her in her affliction.

He had been raised an obedient, truth-loving boy; he had given his mother the assurance that he would not sail out with the neighbors to fish, and he now resolved punctually to keep this promise. Still he would so very, very gladly have procured for her the wished-for alleviation. Often he ran back and forth along the sea-shore, racking his brain for some available plan. Here, all of a sudden, the thought occurred to him, might it not be possible to attain the end in view, and still remain faithful to his promise? Already herein he permitted himself to be influenced too much by the thoughts and devices of his own heart; he reasoned away the conscientious scruples of his breast, and was about to do evil that good might come out of it. He began to contrive some means that would enable him to obey the letter and still violate the intention of his mother's injunction.

Very often his eyes rested on a little boat that was lying idle upon the water near his hut; during the ebb it would lie in the sand on the shore, during the tide it rocked upon the waves. Willie himself, was the cause of his temptation, and so it was no wonder that he was ensnared. He wanted to catch fishes and, ere he was aware of it, he himself was caught in a net. At first he only regarded the skiff with pleasure and longing, as Eve did the tree of knowledge; then the desire arose in him to enter the boat, and in so doing he saw no possible danger; for he could surely get out again, if he chose. But, when once he was in the little boat,

he might as well unchain her and make the trial whether he could not row her away as he had seen his father do; perhaps he could then sail out alone and catch a few fishes and sell them for his mother. Steadily the boat glided forward, and with her Willie's heart leaped merrily over the rolling waves. Further and further she sailed out, and in excellent style he sped from the shore behind him. Wind and tide were favorable to him, a bracing wind and a strong tide. Unwise boy! Like many other young, thoughtless wanderers in the wide wilderness of life, he boldly and joyously rowed on, without thinking whither the lively breeze and the flowing waves would carry him — without considering how he would return. It is true he felt somewhat ill at ease, as if it were not altogether right that he had gone to sea; yet with all that he did not doubt but that he would be able to return just as easily as he had got out; and this feat had been accomplished quite splendidly and without any trouble. In the joy of his heart Willie waved his cap towards the shore, though no one there could see him, and shouted forth a loud, exulting hurrah. Unwise boy! Wind and tide were favorable now; but, when he desired to return, they were adverse.

Onward leaped the skiff, further and further out into the channel which separates England from France. Fortunately Willie did not lose his courage. He found that he was advancing without any trouble and exertion on his part; and he well knew that, should he steer against wind and tide, the boat would capsize. Nevertheless, he felt quite confident that, sooner or

later, he would yet be able to sail back. But now he drifted into a danger of which no thought had before occurred to the poor rogue. It was just at the time of the great war between France and England, about fifty years ago, at the time when Napoleon Bonaparte, who had become the terror of all Europe, had collected a large army at Boulogne, opposite Dover, with the intention of invading England. His men-of-war were cruising in the channel and spying after English fishermen; for Napoleon had given the command to seize all whom they could take captive and bring them to France, as prisoners of war.

One of these French ships spied Willie's little boat and instantly sailed in pursuit of it. But the French only found a poor boy in it, and Willie, who did not know that these were his enemies, did not in the least doubt that they would receive him kindly, and began to relate to them his adventure and to tell them whither he desired to go. When, however, he saw that they did not understand him, and perceived their foreign tongue, then the truth suddenly flashed upon him, that he had been taken captive by the French, of whom his poor neighbors on the coast were in constant dread, and whom the English youth were at that time directed to hate. Now Willie surely was in sorrowful circumstances. He was taken on the large French man-of-war, and dragged away from his native land, away from those who understood his language, and, what was the saddest of all, away from his poor, sick and helpless mother.

As Willie reflected on all this, he could not refrain from tears, and, although the sailors did

not understand him, he unremittingly importuned them with prayers and entreaties, that they would once more place him in his little boat. Again and again he pointed towards the English shore and said: "There, over there; there I want to go!" But they only laughed at his woe-begone face and pointing in the direction of their own coast cried: "La!" or "La bas!" This was all that poor Willie could get in answer. The English national pride now came to his relief; he did not want the French to see his tears, so he seated himself apart from them; for they allowed him the freedom to roam the vessel, and, in general, did not treat him unkindly. "What will they do with me now?" he thought musingly; "perhaps they will force me to become a French sailor? But no, that they shall never do; sooner will I die, for if I should be placed in the French service, I would have to fight with them against the English, and they will never get me to do that! No, if an English vessel should come now and attack the French one, I would jump into the ocean and try to get on board of her; then they might shoot at me if they were a mind to!"

Thus courageous and determined were Willie's thoughts; for he was very much excited and his heart was full to breaking. But, as he grew calmer, more repentant thoughts arose in him; he began to see that he had entered upon a forbidden course, and that he was justly being punished for his transgression. Before these thoughts occurred to him, he was quite confident that God would protect him, even should he cast himself into the ocean and at-



tempt to swim to an English ship, whilst French bullets were whizzing after him; but now this trust had vanished; for he knew that he had erred. Only then can we rest assured of God's protection, when we are found in the path of obedience toward Him.

The ship steered for the French coast, and when she moored in the harbor of Boulogne, Willie was placed on land a prisoner. He was the only booty, which the ship had taken, and, I dare say, the lad cost the French more than he profited them. Here, in France, it now appeared, he was to remain for years, aye, perhaps for life. Have you ever seen Boulogne? Hardly. I was there an hour once, drank a cup of coffee, looked at the splendid sea-shells, which were for sale in a merchant's shop, and entertained myself with the beautiful view on the harbor. It was no hard matter to pass an hour thus, going back and forth between the coffee-house and the harbor. But I was on my return home, was traveling direct for home, and only had to remain over several days at Paris where, because of my thorough knowledge of the French, I had nothing to fear. Willie on the contrary——! Of course, as a mere boy who, besides, had not been taken in battle against the enemies of his country, he was not imprisoned, but enjoyed very kind treatment. The inhabitants of the town, though not very favorably disposed toward England, had compassion on him, comforted and encouraged him, and frequently called him into their houses to give him something to eat; but if they had placed him in a regal palace, he would still have felt unhappy and afflicted.

"My mother! my mother!" was the secret cry of his heart day and night. He did not deny that he had received the well-merited reward for his transgression; but his mother also had to suffer in consequence. Who should now foster her! who entertain or comfort her! who procure for her the daily necessities of life! At last, after much anxiety of mind, Willie quieted his fears with the reflection: "My mother has not failed in anything concerning this matter; God will surely be gracious unto her." And then he knelt upon the sea-shore under a projecting rock and prayed to the God of the widow, confessed his sin, and for the sake of Christ implored pardon for the same. After he had thus confessed his wrong, and reconciled himself to his just punishment, he became more tranquil. But these consoling thoughts respecting his mother could not long support this frame of mind. "Alas, my mother will die!" he would say when anguishing fear again overwhelmed his soul; "she will die without having known what has become of me, without having forgiven me; and I will then be the cause of her death."

Such thoughts tormented him day and night. Finally he determined at all hazards to make an attempt to flee to England. "If they should get me into their power a second time," he said to himself confidently, "then they will certainly confine me in a prison on bread and water, and never let me out; but if I do not get back again to my mother, she will die of grief and penury!" Meanwhile, it was easier to form such a resolution than to execute it. Where should the helpless boy find a boat, and how get over to the

English coast without being detected? Of course, this problem was fraught with as much, or, if not, with more of consequence to him than to us; but he also found a key that enabled him to solve it, although a hazardous one, for it was couched in a wreck. In the immediate vicinity of a large rock, the same upon which Willie was accustomed to sit, in order to give free scope to his gloomy reflections, there lay, upon the strand, a mass of heavy timber and broken planks, the remnants of wrecked vessels, and Willie gradually came to the determination to make a raft of the same and on this to put to sea. At the same time he found comfort in the hope that he could reach and be taken on board of some ship of the English fleet which was just expected in the channel for the purpose of preventing Napoleon's invasion of England. As soon as he had matured his plan, he fell to work; for he longed to return to his mother, and the sooner the better. He labored in a hidden recess under the shelter of the projecting rock, and no one had even a presentiment of the intentions of the young captive, no one perceived anything of his work. You can easily imagine how toilsome such a task must have been for a boy of twelve years, who had not yet the vigor of manhood and to whom all the necessary implements were wanting. But, you know, love spares no pains, and that love is as ingenious as necessity. The two together aided him in constructing his raft, and Robinson Crusoe himself would have had no cause to be ashamed of it.

Moreover, through his experience hitherto,

Willie had grown more prudent than when he ventured out upon the ocean in his skiff. This time he waited for a good wind and a favorable tide before entrusting himself to the waves of the channel. When the proper moment had come he launched his frail raft, a work of no small trouble, then waded out some distance into the sea and mounted the wretched conveyance. May success attend his voyage!

On the little rivulet that flows along beneath my window, I occasionally see little boys rowing by on a raft that will readily carry one or even two of them without sinking. An old door constitutes the float, and a pole, somewhat longer than a broom-stick and which reaches down to the bottom of the run, serves for the rudder. But the rivulet is only about twenty feet wide. The channel between England and France is not very wide at Boulogne, it is true, but still it is several thousand times broader than our rivulet and much, very much deeper. Nevertheless, it is possible that the courageous boy might have succeeded in rowing himself on so far as to reach an English man-of-war or some fishing smack; but a new adventure, in the meantime, was in store for him.

About this time, as already stated, a large army had collected at Boulogne for the purpose of invading England, and the Emperor Napoleon frequently came to the camp to review the troops. He then generally ascended some neighboring height and from thence, by means of his telescope, reconnoitered the English coast to which he wished to make a visit, or waited with longing for the appearance of the French fleet

that was to arrive there from the West Indies, but which was afterwards attacked and disabled by the English. On the same day that Willie entered upon this hazardous voyage, Napoleon also stood upon his accustomed promontory and, by the aid of his perspective, observed some object on a small raft drifting away over the ocean. The coast guard was at once advised of the fact by a signal, and a boat was sent in pursuit of the young navigator who, together with his raft, was quickly taken up and brought back to the land.

This was a short-lived pleasure. How great must have appeared the poor boy's misfortune to be deprived a second time of hope, and at the very moment when he was most confident of success! Whether he could at once reconcile himself to his lot and find comfort in the faith that also here the hand of God was visible, and that, unto those who love God, all things must work together for good even when they least promise to do so—I do not know; but I am inclined to doubt it. Self-promoted Christians who have already made many similar experiences, find it difficult, when a hope on which the heart was set is suddenly torn from their grasp, at once to sustain themselves with the conviction that God in His wisdom performs all things much better than we would know how to do, though every means were afforded us thereto. Afterwards they feel ashamed of their unbelief and faint-heartedness, and resolve to be more resigned in the future. Let us see how it fared with the disheartened Willie!

The emperor inquired into the matter and,

when he heard that it was an English captive who had attempted to escape, he commanded that the man should be brought into his presence. Very likely he supposed it to be some English officer who had been liberated on his parole of honor and now had perfidiously broken his solemn pledge. But when he beheld a mere boy before him, he was greatly surprised and was eager to learn whether pure patriotism had induced him to make the venturesome attempt of escaping from a land in which, after all, he could not have experienced misusage. "My child," he kindly said to Willie, "why did you want to leave us? May it have been for the reason that we are the adversaries of the English?" The emperor spoke through an interpreter, who stood at his side, and Willie, who did not know that it was the emperor, answered in the same manner, without the least fear or hesitancy.

"No, sir; I do not regard you as my enemies, although you are the enemies of my king and my country. It has always been told me that I must hate the French; but they have been very benevolent towards me."

"To whom then did you wish to go?"

"To my mother; she is poor and sick and has no one to take care of her or to do her work for her."

"But you might have drowned," said the emperor, looking on the boy with a well-disposed countenance.

"That is true, sir," replied Willie, "but I was not afraid of it when I sailed from England in a little boat which is now lost. I trusted that

God would take me into His keeping ; and I felt more willing to undertake the hazardous step than to be the cause of my mother's death."

The emperor smiled at these words ; their filial sentiment touched him. Besides, he was at all times an admirer of courage ; and so the moral courage which Willie manifested in the confession of his fault also received his acknowledgement. He directed some further questions to the English lad and caused him to narrate his whole history, how his father had died, what he had promised his mother, how she had been sick and needy, and how he had permitted himself to be misled in the vain hope of thereby aiding his mother, then his adventure with the French ship, his captivity, his anxiety for his sick mother, and how he had attempted to escape upon the raft. Napoleon drew forth three gold pieces on which his image was stamped and said : "My child, you have done wrong ; but you will not do so in the future. You must return to your mother and from henceforth be a good son to her ; but you must not go upon this raft. I will send you on board one of your own ships. Here are several gold coins ; they are called Napoleon d'ors. One is for your mother ; tell her the emperor sends it to her. With the second you can pay for the old skiff that was left on the ocean ; and with the third you can do as you like ; on my account, you may keep it in remembrance of this adventure." Hereupon Napoleon directed his officers to see to it that the young captive be sent on board an English vessel.

Willie was very much amazed when it was told him that he had been speaking with the emperor, with the same terrible Bonaparte, who caused such consternation throughout the whole world, and concerning whom he had heard so much in England. It taught him the lesson that however bad a man may be, he can still possess some good qualities; and that it was not right to hate a people as the youth of England at that time were instructed to cherish hatred towards the French. Although kings and governments and nations are at war and at enmity with each other, there need be no enmity on that account between the people individually.

A boat was soon got in readiness and sent with a flag of truce to an English ship that was easily found. The officers on this ship were not a little surprised when in the name of the French emperor a poor boy was brought on board and the wish of the emperor was expressed that the boy might be taken to his home. When the boat had again pushed off to return to the French coast, the officers put many questions to Willie; for such a thing had never indeed occurred to them before, that a mighty and dreaded emperor should thus interest himself in behalf of a poor fisher-boy. Willie related his whole narrative and exhibited his three Napoleon dor's.

"This was a fortunate adventure for you, my lad!" said one of the officers, "and your error has brought you good fortune. You might have fished a long time until you would have earned three such Napoleon dor's!"

"I trust, dear sir," said Willie, "my experi-



enve will prove to my good and make me more watchful against such temptations in the future. This money alone would by no means repay me for all that I have suffered in the remembrance of my poor mother. Perhaps I am still to suffer the further penalty of finding her dead; but I cannot bear to think of such a thing. I will rather hope that God has spared her life and provided for her wants, and that He will prepare for her another joy in the return of her boy."

The young officer who was conversing with the boy, tapped him on the shoulder and in his rough sailor dialect spoke a few words of praise to him; then he drew from his pocket five shillings, gave them to him, and said: "Now get ready, and Donald will row you to shore; this silver will take you home; and your three gold pieces you must keep until you reach your mother's house."

Willie was greatly rejoiced at this, for it was just what he had desired. With joy he accepted the money and expressed his sincere gratitude to the officer. At Dover he was safely landed, and it did not cost him a penny. Here he might have secured a box on the coach which passed the hut of his mother; but he preferred walking in order to save all his money for her. Oh, what thoughts and images crossed his mind as he journeyed along, hurrying and leaping when the hope of soon embracing his mother gained the ascendancy in him — sneaking and loitering when the fear of finding her in the grave congealed his blood! Which will prove true, hope or fear?

At last he beheld the hut at a distance, and

the blood rushed to his heart with such violence that with great difficulty alone he could breathe; for the nearer he came to his home, the more apprehension overpowered him. "But this is all to no purpose," he at length soliloquized; "my fate is determined, and the sooner I learn it, the better; let it be what it will." Upon this he accelerated his steps and with thronging, anxious sighs prayed to God: "Have mercy! O God, have mercy!" He knew that God understood what he meant. Soon his searching eye discovered that the door of the hut and the two window-shutters were not closed; already this was accepted by him as a good omen. It must be inhabited, and by whom else than his mother? Surely no one else had a right to it; for no debts rested on the property to his knowledge. The last step had been taken; once more he stopped to reflect before entering; he moved around the angle of the house and peeped in through the low window; there she sat near the wall, reading an evening prayer, for the sun was just sinking behind the western horizon. Ah, now fears could no longer stay his feet, and had Willie followed the promptings of his heart, he would have bounded into the little chamber in three leaps; yet, the boy was so thoughtful as to remember the invalid state of his mother; he did not intend to kill her now by surprise, after he had so nearly caused her death by his disobedience. For this reason he first sang in a low voice a fisher-ballad, which he had often sung in former days, that it might gradually prepare her for his appearance, then he slowly entered and embraced her knees, but in the emotion of his

heart could not articulate a word until, at last, his heart found relief in a stream of gushing tears.

Yes, she still lived, the much tried mother, although the grief for her lost son had almost broken her heart. She still lived; and who would attempt to describe her joy when she once more beheld him safe before her! She had also recovered from her illness so far as this was possible under the distressing sorrow which had been added to her bodily sufferings; and her kind neighbors, though they themselves were poor, out of compassion for the widow and her two-fold misfortune, had interested themselves with hearty sympathy and benevolence in her behalf. Had any one told her a few days or weeks before that her son was a captive in France, full of anxiety and joy she would have exclaimed: "My son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die!" and without doubt she would have gone and participated in his captivity. And now she had the pleasure of once more seeing him before her alive, chastened it is true, but not given over unto death; for though indeed he had been disobedient, he had been so out of love. How much there now was to be told on both sides until a late hour of the night! All anxiety and fear had resolved itself into joy! So it will once be in the heavenly home when the rescued, who have escaped out of much tribulation, impart to each other their experiences during their earthly pilgrimage, and render praise and honor to God and to the Lamb!

Willie gave his dear mother the gold-piece

that Napoleon had sent to her and said he must keep the second till he should know the value of the skiff which he had taken, for the French sailors had pushed it out into the ocean and so it had been lost. But the third he would like to preserve, if he were permitted to do so, in remembrance of his sad experience. His mother in turn related to him that the skiff had again come to land with the reflux tide, and that the rightful owner, whose name it bore, had obtained it in sound condition from some fishermen. The return of the empty skiff had left no one in doubt as to Willie's fate. All now considered it as confirmed that the foolhardy little fellow had been drowned, and the poor mother, who thought that he had perished a sacrifice to his disobedience, consequently had to suffer more of pain and grief than of anxious uncertainty.

The heart of the widow now leaped for joy. "My dear son," she said to Willie, "you shall keep this gold-piece; and it would have to go hard with us if ever we should part from it. As often as you view it, even when your poor mother once lies in the grave, remember that the God whom you should serve and whom you should fear as long as you live, has shown himself the father of the orphan and the support of the widow. It was the Lord who liberated us from the hand of the enemy and who spared my life. Now, my son, in all your paths give Him the honor, then will He lead you aright. And should you ever be the father of children, then show them this coin and relate to them what you have endured and what your mother, with whom you certainly meant it well, had to

suffer on your account. Tell them that it is at all times wrong and imprudent to do evil that good may come of it."

The widow and her son lived happy together. It was to be expected that such a gallant, spirited, honest and God-fearing boy, who had ventured so much for his good mother, should sooner or later be in the condition to render her material aid; and so it came to pass. Willie grew up to be an able and a skillful workman, who could liberally provide for his aged mother, and after her death, for a family of his own. The Napoleon d'or is still to be seen in Willie's family, where it is preserved as a kind of heir-loom. His aged mother ended her earthly pilgrimage some years since and has gone to her sainted home; but her grand-children view the gold-piece with veneration as often as it is shown to them. At such times the history connected with it, of the borrowed, lost and refound skiff, the French man-of-war, the captivity in Boulogne, the raft constructed out of the wreck, the Emperor Napoleon and his telescope, the happy liberation of the captive, and his return to his sorrowing mother, is always repeated with the earnest admonition: "Children, do not by disobedience place yourselves in the path of danger."

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## THREE WISE LITTLE BOYS.



## A CHRISTMAS STORY.

**C**HRISTMAS always falls on the twenty-fifth of December, even if it is leap year, which joggles the almanac so, and sometimes the twenty-fifth is Sunday; and so it happened one year that in the little village of Blessington, Christmas and Sunday and the twenty-fifth of December all fell on the same day, and more than that, little Jacob Olds's birthday was on the same day; and when I tell you that little Jacob was exactly, to a day, one year younger than his brothers John and Peter Olds, you will see what a great occasion it was when the twenty-fifth of December, and Christmas, and Sunday, and little Jacob's birthday, and John's birthday, and Peter's birthday, all happened together; and oh, one thing more — Mr. and Mrs. Olds were married on Christmas eight years before, and this was leap year. I suppose it is not very often that such a Christmas happens.

The evening before this Christmas, John and Peter and little Jacob were playing about their father and mother just before bedtime. The pretty room was nicely furnished, for there was Mr. Olds with his newspaper, pretending to read, and Mrs. Olds with her sewing, pretending to sew, and Peter and John and little Jacob playing about like three little kittens. Little Jacob finally climbed into his father's lap and pretended to read the newspaper too. There was a

long column of print all about the financial difficulties of Austria, and Jaky read it aloud to his father somewhat thus, with his fat finger moving over the lines:—

“On Christmas morning children have presents from their papas and mamas. Sometimes they are in stockings, but ours are on a big table. Some boys like books, but I like a sled. I think my papa will give me a sled,”—here he had nearly reached the bottom of the column, he read so fast, and so he ended up, — “and we wish you all a merry Christmas. Yours truly, Jacob Olds and Company.”

“Oh, is that in the newspaper?” asked Peter, who had been listening. “Why, that’s my father’s name.”

“Pooh, you goose,” said John, who was exactly of the same age, but always treated Peter as if he were years younger, “that’s Jaky. He made it up.”

“Oh,” said Pete, who was not very quick, “I thought he was reading. Mamma, what is Christmas, anyway? It isn’t Sunday, is it?”

“I know,” said John. “It’s the day when presents are given. You have to say ‘Merry Christmas’ to everybody, and one who gets up first and says it, is the best fellow.”

“Then I’ll get up first,” said Peter. “You wake me, will you, mamma?”

“Ah,” said John, “you’re great. If mother wakes up first she’ll say it.”

“Any way,” said Peter, “we’re going to have a great dinner. I heard Becky say so, and she says folks always have a great dinner on Christmas.”

"Becky knows ever so much," said little Jacob. "She knows a lot she won't tell. She knows something about Christmas that's a secret, I guess. I said Christmas was my birthday."

"It's my birthday, too," said Peter, who wanted to have everything that anybody else had.

"Well, it's mine, too," said John. "Anybody'd think you owned it. Does Christmas always come on Sunday, father? To-morrow's Sunday."

"It hasn't anything to do with Sunday," said Mr. Olds. "It only happens so."

"Becky says," went on Jacob, "that she's always glad when Christmas comes on Sunday, and when I asked her why, she said because somebody she knew about was born on Christmas, and liked Sunday. I don't think that's much."

At this moment Becky herself, the old nurse, appeared in the doorway to lead the children to bed. They went frolicking upstairs, and Mr. and Mrs. Olds were left alone. Mrs. Olds stitched on in silence for a moment, and then looked timidly at her husband, who sat behind the newspaper.

"My heart misgives me, Jacob," said she. "I don't know, I sometimes think it would be better if the children were to know—to know something about what people generally know—what they read in the Bible."

"Becky hasn't been telling them any stories out of the Bible, has she?" asked Mr. Olds, impatiently. "I told her when she came, that if



I ever found her telling religious stuff to my children, she should leave at once. I'm not going to have her putting nonsense into their heads. I intend they shall grow up rationally, and make up their minds for themselves without any prejudice."

"I don't think she has," said his wife, with a doubtful look on her face. "You see how she checked herself when Jaky asked her about Christmas. She feels pretty badly though about it."

"Let her," said Mr. Olds, pushing his spectacles hard down on his nose. "It's not her concern, at least."

Becky had taken the three children to the room in which they all slept in their little beds, and had tucked them in, and then, as was her wont, had got down upon her poor old knees and prayed hastily within herself that the Lord would bless the darlings, and send somebody to teach them; while the children, as usual, kept still, because Becky was looking under the beds, as they thought, to see if any person was there, and their little hearts were always in a little fright till Becky got up again and kissed them, and told them that they might go to sleep, for somebody was watching over them, and would keep them safe; and as they always found Becky there when they woke up, they had no doubt she was the somebody, and Peter when he heard Becky say somebody was watching over them, secretly thought that Becky herself climbed upon the bedpost and sat there all night, where

she could see them all, and could keep off danger.

But this night the children were wide awake, and begged Becky to stay and tell them a story, or sing a song. The poor old thing had her head full of Bible stories and hymns, but she had been forbidden to tell them to the children, and so she had to fall back on the days of her childhood, when she lived in a little village of England.

"Tell us what you used to do when you were a little girl," said John.

"Sing us a song," said Peter.

"I know," said little Jacob; "tell us about Christmas, Becky. Tell us about the man that had his birthday then, and liked Sunday. You know."

"Who was it?" asked Peter.

"It was somebody," began poor Becky, at her wit's end how to tell what she longed to tell, without disobeying, and so making a sad mystery of it all.

"Oh, was it Somebody," cried Peter, "Somebody who watches over us? But you're a woman, Becky."

"The dear child," said the puzzled old body, "so I am. If I was only a man, like old Parson Dawes that used to be."

"Tell us about Parson Dawes," struck in John, who thought they were not getting on with a story.

"Well, I will," said old Becky, suddenly brightening up, "and I'll tell you about what Parson Dawes did when I was a little girl. Parson Dawes he was a good man, a very good

man, but he hadn't any children of his own, and so says he one Christmas time to the chorister, — that's my father, children—"

"O Becky, you're making up," said Peter, "you haven't got any father."

"But I had one, Peter, when I was a little girl."

"Was it Somebody?" asked John, who thought that Becky was always making believe when she spoke of somebody.

"The dear children," murmured the old woman. "Says he, says Parson Dawes to my father, 'Simon,' he says, 'they used to have a custom for children to go about Christmas eve and sing carols. Now, you just teach the children to sing one, and I'll go round with the children myself and sing it.' He was a nice old man, Parson Dawes, but folks thought he was rather queer, p'raps because he didn't have no children of his own. So my father, he taught us children a carol which Parson Dawes he gave him; and sure enough we went round, and Parson Dawes he went with us, and we sang, and we sang — oh, it was beautiful," and nurse Becky, forgetting everything except what she was remembering, and forgetting her own poor cracked old voice, piped out to a sweet air the words:—

"God rest you, merry gentlemen,  
Let nothing you dismay,  
For Jesus Christ, our Savior,  
Was born upon this day,  
To save us all from Satan's power,  
When we were gone astray.

- “In Bethlehem, in Jewry,  
This blessed babe was born,  
And laid within a manger  
Upon this blessed morn;  
The which His mother, Mary,  
Nothing did take in scorn.
- “From God, our Heavenly Father,  
A blessed angel came,  
And unto certain shepherds  
Brought tidings of the same,  
How that in Bethlehem was born  
The Son of God by name.
- “Fear not, then said the angel,  
Let nothing you affright,  
This day is born a Savior  
Of virtue, power and might;  
So frequently to vanquish all  
The friends of Satan quite.
- “The shepherds at those tidings  
Rejoiced much in mind.  
And left their flocks a feeding  
In tempest, storm and wind,  
And went to Bethlehem straightway,  
This blessed babe to find.
- “But when to Bethlehem they came,  
Whereas this infant lay,  
They found Him in a manger,  
Where oxen fed on hay,  
His mother Mary kneeling,  
Unto the Lord did pray.
- “Now to the Lord sing praises,  
All you within this place,  
And with true love and brotherhood,  
Each other now embrace;  
This holy tide of Christmas  
All others doth deface.
- “Oh tidings of comfort and joy!  
For Jesus Christ our Saviour  
Was born on Christmas-day.”

"And did Parson Dawes sing it all with the children?" asked John.

"Indeed he did," said Becky, warming with the recollection. "We just went from one house to another a-singing, and Parson Dawes he carried a stick and pounded on the ground when we sang. He was just daft-like, when we was a-singing, and he took to his bed that very night, and so he died."

This was quite unexpected and Peter began to cry.

"What made him die?" said he, whimpering. "What made Parson Dawes die? I didn't want him to die."

Little Jacob had said nothing, but his busy little head was trying to put together what nurse had said and sung.

"Nurse," said he, "do please sing that again. That part about the shepherds."

So Becky sang again:—

"The shepherds at those tidings  
Rejoiced much in mind,  
And left their flocks a feeding  
In tempest, storm, and wind,  
And went to Bethlehem straightway,  
This blessed babe to find.

' Oh tidings of comfort and joy!  
For Jesus Christ our Savior  
Was born on Christmas-day.

' But when to Bethlehem they came,  
Whereas this infant lay,  
They found Him in a manger,  
Where oxen feed on hay,  
His mother Mary kneeling,  
Unto the Lord did pray.'"

"But what made them go to Bethlem?" asked John. "What's Bethlem?"

"Why it's where the babe was," said little Jacob. "Don't you see?"

"The little babe that was born, was Jesus Christ, the Lord," said old Becky reverently, clasping her hands and lifting up her face. "And He was the Lord of glory who had come down on earth to live, and He was born a little babe in a manger, and when the shepherds came they found the little babe a-lying in the manger; and the little babe grew up, and He healed the sick, and He taught us about God and heaven, and then wicked men killed Him, and then He died for us — poor little children," — broke out old Becky, choking down her sobs; "and I wasn't to tell you, but I couldn't help it if I was to leave this night — there!" And the old nurse threw herself down on her knees, and wept and prayed aloud that the good Lord would teach the little ignorant ones, and tell them about Jesus. Then Becky left.

"Oh, don't go," said Jaky, "don't go, nurse. I'm going to sing that over again," and he tried to sing the verse that had been sung last. He came pretty near it, and the other children took hold with eagerness and insisted on singing it, too. They had sweet voices, and pretty soon old Becky with her cracked voice, and the three children, were all singing together.

But Becky began to be troubled and said she must not stay any longer, and that the children must go to sleep. So she kissed them once more and went out softly. The children could not go to sleep, they were so excited.

"It was a secret," said John. "She said she wasn't to tell. I guess father and mother were keeping it for a surprise."

"I guess it was Somebody that was born," said Peter. "And he died just like Parson Dawes."

"I wish we could have heard them all sing," said little Jacob; "it must have sounded like what the shepherds heard."

"I say," said John, in a hurried whisper, "Let's us."

"What?" said little Jacob, starting up.

"Let's us sing," said John.

"Well," said Peter, beginning—

"The shepherds at those tidings—"

"No, no," said John, impatiently. "Peter, Peter, I don't mean here, but let's play we were Parson Dawes and the children. I'll be Parson Dawes and you be the children, and we'll sing, just as they did."

"Oh, do," said little Jacob, eagerly, and he bounced out of bed. "Johnny, Johnny, we'll put on our things and go out, and nobody will hear us, and then we'll sing."

THE CHRISTMAS PLEASURES OF AFFECTION-  
ATE PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE "JUGENDFREUND."

**M**ARY, how much money have you saved for Christmas?" said John, a boy of sixteen years, to his sister. "I have received two dollars from my master for the extra hours during which I worked for him."

"Indeed, so much?—I do not think that Madame Tugend will give me as much. It is now four months since I have been sweeping the street before her house every Wednesday and Saturday evening. She has so often given me something for our sick mother that I cannot expect a present now; but perhaps she may still give me a trifle."

"O, if it were only a dollar," said John. "We could then prepare a surprise for our poor sick mother on Christmas, and also have something to present to our dear father. What do you think would give mother the greatest pleasure? As she has now been sick so long we must show her special affection, and father will be satisfied with any little present."

"Do you not remember, John, how sadly she said to herself a few weeks ago, after our minister had paid us a visit: 'O if I could only have such a beautiful hymn-book as that is, from which he always reads to me!' I have already prayed to the Lord Jesus so to help us that we may be able to give one to our dear mother.



Now, we can do it, and this, I think, will give her the greatest pleasure. Something will then remain over for our father, and perhaps, too, something for our little sister; for the hymn-book will not cost very much."

"O, that is beautiful!" said John. "Now be very quiet, and say nothing to anyone about it, for in one week we must surprise them all. O, how happy I am now already, when I think that father and mother, who always gaze on us so tenderly, will rejoice with us. Let us not forget to entreat our Saviour that it may all pass off well."

This conversation occurred between the brother and sister one Sunday as they returned, unaccompanied by their parents or friends, from church. Mary had already reached her thirteenth year. She attended school daily, but a portion of each day was spent in the discharge of home duties, as her mother had already, for the past six months, been suffering from consumption. After she had completed her work, and wound the spools for her father, who was a weaver, she would request permission to be absent a short time every Wednesday and Saturday evening. Her parents readily complied with this request, for they thought that Mary then joined her young friends for the purpose of walking or playing with them. But Mary spent this time at Madame Tugend's, in order to obtain a little money with which to purchase some luxury for her sick mother.

During the night intervening between Sunday and Monday, her mother was unable to sleep. Her cough returned incessantly, and her

breathing became difficult; her husband rose from time to time in order to assist her in changing her position, or to procure her something to drink. At these times he generally repeated to her some promise from the Bible, by which she might be comforted; and as Christmas was now rapidly approaching, he said to her: "My dear wife, Christmas will soon be here, and you know that the angel said: 'Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people.' You, too, are numbered among 'all people,' and you also will have great joy despite your sufferings when Christmas arrives."

"Ah! yes, that is true, my dear husband," sighed the poor woman, "and I daily experience great joy in my Saviour, and my joy is increased at Christmas. But one thing disturbs me; my Christmas pleasure is affected by the thought that this year we cannot have a Christmas tree for our dear children, and are unable to give them any presents. We have always done so previously, but the Lord has visited us with great affliction this year — I have been sick very long, and compelled to procure many little comforts; then, too, business has not been very prosperous, and there are so many of our poor neighbors who, from time to time, have required a little assistance."

She fell back completely exhausted by the protracted conversation. After she had again slightly recovered, her husband took her hand in his own and replied: "What you have said, dear wife, respecting our limited income and the increased outlay, is certainly true, though I think our children hardly expect a present from us.

But if your pleasure at Christmas will be so much affected by their not receiving any presents, I will tell you a thought which has just suggested itself to me, and which will certainly please you. I have, you know, always preserved my best coat since our wedding; I have worn it very little, and it is therefore still quite good. You will remember that my master, with whom I was then living, presented it to me, and his servant afterwards told me that he paid the tailor twenty dollars for it. If I would take the coat to the pawnbroker's, I would certainly receive sufficient to enable us to prepare a trifling pleasure for our children and the poor neighbors. The Lord Jesus was compelled to forsake still more glorious things in heaven, in order to win life and salvation for us; and His pilgrimage on earth was more trying to Him than it would be to me to dispose of my best coat at the pawnbroker's, and wear my ordinary one to church. If I can thus secure any happiness for the children, I will do it very willingly, and my pleasure at Christmas will thus be increased."

A fervent pressure of the hand, and a look of gratitude proved to him the pleasure which his proposed expedient afforded to his wife. After a short time she gently replied, "That is well, Henry. True, I have no fine clothes for which we could receive anything, but it has just occurred to me that I still possess the gold ear-rings which my sainted mother once gave me. They are lying back on the upper shelf of the closet, as I have not worn them for a long time. Take them also, and if the coat does not bring sufficient, pawn the ear-rings, too."

"That is a good plan, dear Hannah; now compose yourself to sleep. Our heavenly Father will take care of us." Although the thought of the disappointment had previously prevented her from sleeping, now that all was satisfactorily arranged, and she knew the children would receive their accustomed Christmas presents, she fell into a gentle slumber.

John and Mary both slept in a narrow upper room; as their days were spent in labor, their father desired them both to have the full benefit of undisturbed repose, which, in their mother's room, could not be obtained. On Saturday morning both the children awoke early, and, as it was not yet time to arise, they lay still, consulting about their plans for Christmas morning. Mary had, to her great surprise, received two dollars from Madame Tugend, and John had learned at a book-seller's store that the price of a hymn-book, handsomely bound, was one dollar and a half. They both agreed in thinking that only a handsome copy should be presented to their mother. But what should now be done with the remaining two and a half dollars? After a few minutes' reflection, John suddenly exclaimed: "Now, I know what we must give to father. Since our mother's sickness he has entirely given up smoking, and I do not even know where his pipe is. I believe that he has sold it, and made up his mind to stop smoking, as it costs too much. Now, we will buy him a nice pipe and a couple of pounds of tobacco. O, how glad he will be to see his pipe on Christmas day.

"O, yes; that will do very well," said Mary; "but what shall we give to our little Hannah? I think we might buy her a new dress. I know of a store where we can obtain one very cheaply, and with the money that remains we can buy something for her to eat."

"But Mary," said John, "will we still have anything left for little Minnie, our sick neighbor's daughter? She will have no presents at all on Christmas, since her mother is so very ill, and her father is dead."

"Yes, indeed, I have already thought of her," said Mary. "Mrs. Tugend's daughter Emily made me a present of a dress, which is a little too short for me. It will just suit little Minnie, and one is enough for me."

While they were thus planning and consulting, the time passed, and they soon arose. John was commissioned to purchase their presents, and bring them carefully that evening to their little room. After they had dressed themselves, they both kneeled down and thanked their kind Heavenly Father for the quiet repose of the past night, and entreated Him to watch over them during the day, and preserve both their bodies and souls from danger. Neither did they forget to commend their sick mother and neighbor to the protecting care of the Lord.

Their father had performed his unpleasant task the previous day, and now, during the absence of the children, he consulted with their mother respecting the necessary purchases which he should make; for luxuries they could not at this time afford. Mary needed a new dress, as hers was already very old and thin,

and her parents did not know that she had received another. She had purposely abstained from mentioning the circumstance, and thought it no wrong to do so, as she immediately determined that it should be presented to Minnie Arndt. John needed a pair of new shoes and a new cap. Both the children, owing to the increasing cold, were in want of gloves and shawls. Little Hannah required a new bonnet and a pair of shoes. Besides these purchases, their father also procured a Christmas tree, for which he paid a small amount, and the wax tapers also cost a trifling sum. Previously to Mary's return from school, he cut a few pretty figures out of variegated papers, and their sick mother felt strong enough that day to gild a few nuts. Thus everything was carefully prepared without the knowledge of the children, in order that their surprise upon the following morning might be greater. Their father had left his coat at the pawnbroker's, but had brought back the ear-rings, without informing his wife, for she, too, was anxious to make some sacrifice in order to promote the happiness of her children.

Christmas eve at length arrived. Mary arranged the little room very tastefully and scattered fresh sand upon the floor, while her mother dressed the bed in clean linen and a counterpane. The stove and tinware glistened beautifully, and in short, it was a very pleasant-looking little room. John had returned earlier than usual from his work, while little Hannah lay quietly sleeping upon her bed. The father and children were seated near the bedside of

the sick parent, and solemn silence had fallen upon them all.

Suddenly the church bells commenced to ring, and the loved sound re-echoed over the peaceful, snow-capped land, and was heard through the soft pleasant moonlight, by the quiet little family. O! it seemed then as if all within and without that apartment were in momentary expectation of the angel from heaven, with the joyful words: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

At length the mother broke the silence, and said: "Children, sing for me that beautiful hymn, 'How shall we receive Thee, O Christ.'"

The two united their fine clear voices, and sang the hymn, whilst their father and mother listened with streaming eyes. The former then took up the Bible, and turning to the first chapter of Luke, he read from the twenty-sixth verse to the conclusion of the chapter. As he repeated the hymn which Mary uttered, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," his wife sobbed aloud, and exclaimed, "My soul also, and my spirit rejoice in Him, for He regardeth me in my affliction."

After the conclusion of the reading, the father kneeled down and prayed. O, what a fervent, heart-felt petition then ascended to the throne of grace! When their devotions were ended, Mary prepared their evening meal, and John, embracing this opportunity, softly ascended the stairs in order to bring the presents to their parents. They had previously decided

that, after the meal, the surprise should take place, as their mother could thus, on the succeeding day, already be comforted and edified by the hymn-book. Sufficient money had also remained for purchasing her a bottle of invigorating almond milk, with which they intended to surprise her on the following morning.

The evening meal was partaken of, and, as 'twas Christmas eve, some coffee and cake had been added to the usual fare. Their father again seated himself near the bedside of his wife. Both the children then approached, Mary carrying the hymn-book, and John bringing the tobacco and pipe. The parents were completely overcome by this exhibition of love, and could not utter a word.

John, taking courage, now said: "You, dear parents, have for so many years prepared presents for us on Christmas, that we now wish on this occasion to give you a little pleasure. We know, indeed, this year you can give us nothing, however anxious you might be to do it. But we are much happier this time than ever before, and thank our dear Lord Jesus that He has given us an opportunity to prepare this pleasure for you from our earnings, in return for your great love."

He could say no more; his father had fallen upon his neck and Mary had thrown herself upon her mother's bosom. They could not speak, but they wept together from pure joy. After the lapse of a few minutes, John commenced singing the hymn,

"Joyfully my heart shall leap."



As he proceeded, the others mingled their voices with his own, and the angels in heaven must also have united their strains with those on earth.

The great excitement had so overcome their sick mother that their father desired his children to retire to rest, particularly as he felt anxious to arrange the Christmas tree for them, and the thought of their surprise now afforded him a double pleasure.

When Mary and John had reached their own apartment, they exclaimed together: "O! I am happier now than I ever was before, when our parents made us presents. I was never so happy before." And when they knelt to repeat their evening petitions, fervent thanks ascended to their Saviour, for having granted them such joy. They fell into a peaceful slumber, filled with the thought of the pleasure they had prepared for Minnie Arndt on the coming evening.

The children were greatly surprised on the following morning, when they had left their room, to find that their father had already arisen; and when Mary wished to go into the next room to see how her mother had passed the night, her father detained her for a few moments with some trifling matter. The door then opened, and before the astonished children stood the Christmas tree brilliantly illuminated, while beneath it lay the presents for each of the children. Even their mother had arisen in order herself to welcome them. Ah, that was indeed a surprise! Thus while the children had thought of their parents, the lat-

ter likewise had cared for and prepared this pleasure for them. The scene of Christmas eve was repeated upon Christmas morning. Tears of joy flowed freely, and were shortly succeeded by the singing of that beautiful hymn:

“Joy to the world! the Lord has come!  
Let earth receive her King:  
Let every heart prepare Him room,  
And heaven and nature sing.”

After breakfast, John and his father repaired to the church, where their pastor preached from the words: “Charity, love, seeketh not her own.” He described how God had proved this to us in giving us such a Savior, and also pointed out the obligation which lay upon us to imitate God by manifestating a spirit of disinterested love to our neighbors. The joyful and encouraging Gospel of the love of God was his theme. The two readily comprehended the sermon and fully realized that the greatest reward of love is perfect reciprocal love.

On the evening which closed this pleasant Christmas Day, the children carried the Christmas tree to their sick neighbor, and presented it to their little Minnie.

Reader, has this Christmas Day pleased thee?











